EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

University of Rochester

BRUCKNER’S MASS IN D MINOR: PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 19TH-CENTURY SYMPHONIC MASS

Doctoral Research Project by

Deanna Lynn Joseph

Candidate for the Degree

Doctor of Musical Arts
Conducting

Performance Featuring
The Eastman Rochester Chorus
The Eastman Chorale
The Eastman Philharmonia

April 10, 2010
8:00pm

Sacred Heart Cathedral
296 Flower City Park
Rochester, NY 14615
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Introduction

Historically informed performance procedures have become quite popular with musicians of the past fifty years. Baroque performance practice is the most developed field of this research, and in this day and age, educated musicians can talk with ease, if not total agreement, about subjects such as the number of singers in Bach’s choir, the use of period instruments, the influence of dance forms, and expressive elements such as tempi, tone color, and articulation.

But what about performance practices of the 19th century? How did the music of Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Wagner sound? Imagine for a moment hearing a Brahms symphony either on a recording or at the last live performance you attended. What are the colors coming from the orchestra? What is the size of the ensemble? Are the tempi generally fast or slow, steady or flexible? Do the strings in the orchestra make a consistent use of vibrato and portamento?

Virtually all modern-day classically trained musicians have grown up playing and listening to the music of Romantic composers such as Brahms, Mendelssohn, and Chopin. Today, there is a certain comfort level with this repertoire, so much so that musicians have a preconceived sound concept for this music. How do musicians know, however, that the way this Romantic literature is being performed is historically informed? Are there resources to which modern-day musicians can turn to educate themselves on the way that 19th-century musicians played the music of their time?
Fortunately, music of the late Romantic era is preserved in the most valuable of all possible primary sources: recordings. In fact, the earliest surviving music recording is that of a choral performance from the 1888 Crystal Palace Handel Festival in London featuring portions of Handel’s Israel in Egypt.\(^1\) An enormous number of recordings survive from around 1900 that allow present-day musicians to enter this world of the past.

Performance practice scholarship of the last twenty years has seen an increase in analysis of these recordings, as well as research into 19th-century books on singing technique and interpretation, and techniques of playing the piano, violin, and other instruments. Additionally, many of these treatises shed light on issues of tempo, phrasing, dynamics, and tone color, serving as virtual “how-to” guides straight from the pens of the actual performers and teachers of the Romantic period.

This project is an exploration of 19th-century performance procedures and documentation of a historically informed performance of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor. The goal of the project is to present viable new options for performing, interpreting, and experiencing choral-orchestral works of the late Romantic era. Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor was chosen for this study for several reasons. First of all, the piece is rarely performed and therefore is new to the ears of even highly trained classical musicians. (Acclaimed conductor Joseph Flummerfelt, who was present for my performance, had never before heard the piece.) This was beneficial for an experiment of this nature because neither the performing
musicians nor the audience came into the performance with a preconceived concept of how the piece should sound, which allowed for more freedom to experiment with 19th-century performance techniques. Secondly, not much research exists on this mass, and because of this it was calling out to be studied. Lastly, not much is known about the first performance of this piece, which encouraged the Eastman performers to utilize special creativity with the 19th-century techniques.

The performance of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor took place on April 11, 2010, at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York. Performers included the Eastman-Rochester Chorus, the Eastman Chorale, the Eastman Philharmonia, organ, and vocal soloists. The performance utilized two conductors due to the placement of choirs in front of the orchestra (explanation to follow). I conducted the orchestra and my colleague Gregory Ristow was the chorus conductor. Primary sources for this project included Bruckner’s manuscript of the mass, diagrams and images of 19th-century choral-orchestral performances, and recordings of early choral and orchestral performances.
Part I: Historical Context and Overview of the Mass in D Minor

Bruckner’s first three professional positions were as assistant schoolteacher in the schoolhouses of Windhaag (1841-1843), Kronstorf (1843-1845), and St. Florian (1845-1855). In these positions, he was responsible for playing the organ and providing the liturgical music in the village church. His first three (unnumbered) masses were composed for these amateur environments. A complete chart of Bruckner’s masses, including composition and revision dates, can be found in Table I.²

Table I. Bruckner’s Masses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and volume in the Bruckner Collected Works edition:</th>
<th>Setting:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mass in C major “Windhaag” (21)</td>
<td>A solo, 2 hrns, org</td>
<td>1842?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass in D minor “Kronstorf” (21)</td>
<td>SATB chorus</td>
<td>1844?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass in F major for Maundy Thursday (Christus factus est, 21)</td>
<td>SATB chorus</td>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiem (14)</td>
<td>SATB soli, SATB chorus, 3 trbns, str, org</td>
<td>1849, rev. 1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missa solemnis (16)</td>
<td>SATB soli, SATB Chorus, orch., org.</td>
<td>1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass No. 1 in D minor (16)</td>
<td>SATB soli, SATB Chorus, orch., org.</td>
<td>1864 rev., 1876, 1881, 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass No. 2 in E minor (17, 1-2)</td>
<td>SSAATTBB chorus, ww., brass</td>
<td>1866 rev. 1876, 1877, 1881, 1893?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass No. 3 in F minor (18)</td>
<td>SATB soli, SATB Chorus, orch., org.</td>
<td>1876-8 rev. 1876, 1877, 1881, 1893?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1845, Bruckner moved to St. Florian, where he served as the monastery organist. The music repertory at the monastery was quite extensive and regularly featured mass and vespers music by Austrian pre-classical and classical composers, including Michael Haydn (1737-1806), Joseph Eybler (1765-1846), Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). A few
Baroque composers were also represented. Bruckner heard and performed these works and consequently must have studied the scores. In fact, copies in Bruckner’s own hand of several of these masses still exist.³

Due to this influence, Bruckner’s masses from this period are a stylistic hybrid of earlier music of composers such as Haydn and Mozart. His first major work for chorus and orchestra is the Requiem in D minor (1849). It was composed in the same key and with literal citations from Mozart’s Requiem, K. 626.⁴ This is most clear in the use of an extended fugue in the “Quam olim Abrahae promisisti” section. Mozart’s Requiem also utilizes a fugue at these words, similar instrumentation, and the same key.⁵

Bruckner left St. Florian in 1855 and moved to work as an organist in the Linz Cathedral. It was then that he began a concentrated eight-year period of composition study (1855-1863); first with Simon Sechter and then with Otto Kitzler. Under Kitzler, Bruckner honed his skills in the art of counterpoint and fugue.⁶ Kitzler mentored Bruckner towards a more current compositional style and also may be credited for introducing him to the music of his contemporary, Richard Wagner (1813-1883).⁷ Throughout the course of his life, Bruckner continued to cultivate his knowledge of and admiration for the music of Wagner, whom he came to refer to as the “Meister aller Meister” (master of all masters).⁸ Exposure to Wagner’s use of harmony marked a change in Bruckner’s compositions. He adopted Wagner’s harmonic vocabulary while still looking back to the Classical period for large-scale form and overall structure; both
features combine to form a hallmark of his mature style. According to the autograph, Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor was completed on September 1, 1864; it was premiered in a liturgical ceremony on November 20, 1864, to rave reviews. The following notice was published the day after the premier performance in the Linzer Abendbote: “According to some of our most renowned musical experts, Anton Bruckner’s Mass in D-major [sic] which was performed yesterday at the cathedral, is the best thing of its kind [to be written] for a long time” Nothing in his previous works could compare to this new composition. Bruckner himself described it as “very serious and original.” Bruckner scholar Paul Hawkshaw of Yale University notes that the Mass in D Minor is mature Bruckner: monumental in conception, symphonic in development, economic in material, and dramatic in expression. The Mass was repeated as a Concert spirituel on December 18, 1864, at the Redoutensaal in Linz. Bruckner wrote to Rudolf Weinwurm on December 26:

My mass was performed on November 20 in the cathedral and on December 18 as a Concert Spirituel in the Redoutensaal through the initiative of a few friends of music. The fact that the second performance was so well attended – I would almost call it overcrowded – may prove to you how well it was received in the church. I find this all the more amazing, since the composition is a very serious one and out of the ordinary.

For this second performance, Bruckner transferred the occasional solo organ part to two clarinets and two bassoons for practical purposes (there was no organ at the Redoutensaal), and also because he was not completely happy with it: “the organs mostly sound too deep” (Bruckner to Weinwurm on January 21,
Weinwurm tried unsuccessfully to assemble a performance at Vienna University for their 500-year anniversary. Two years later Johann Herbeck conducted the Mass at Vienna’s Hofburgkapelle.

The mass is composed in six movements. The Kyrie is an ABA’ form in D minor. The Gloria is set in D major and has an introduction, then proceeds in ABA’ form, and ends with a stile antico Amen fugue. The movement also begins with the tenor soloist singing the incipit of the Gloria chant. While in earlier mass settings by composers such as Josquin and Palestrina starting with the incipit was quite commonplace, by Bruckner’s time the practice had fallen out of fashion. Earlier mass settings were composed as functional music. The priest sang the incipit and the choir performed the rest of the movement. By Bruckner’s time, composers sometimes set the mass text with only concert performance in mind. Bruckner’s mass, as will be explored later in the paper, was written with both liturgical function and concert performance in mind.

The Credo also begins with the tenor singing the incipit of the chant. The key is D major and is in ABA’ form with a lengthy B section. The “Et vitam venturi” text is not set as a fugue, as was the convention, but rather, Bruckner scores it with full orchestra, lush romantic harmonies, and predominant homophony in the choral writing. The Sanctus is in D major and begins with a maestoso opening with a shift to allegro at the Hosanna. The Benedictus is in G major. Breaking with tradition established by Classical composers such as Haydn and Mozart and reinforced by Romantic composers such as Beethoven
and Schubert, Bruckner gives the chorus a central role in this movement, writing less for the vocal soloists. The Agnus Dei is in D minor. The Dona Nobis Pacem recapitulates the D minor music from the Kyrie and concludes in D major. In the form of the entire work, Bruckner fulfills the listener’s expectations in that the dark and brooding opening of the Kyrie is resolved, as the motives and keys are transformed to major in the final section of the Agnus Dei, the Dona Nobis Pacem. A chart of the structural overview of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor can be found in Table II.

**Table II. Principal Tonalities of the Mass in D Minor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kyrie</th>
<th>Gloria</th>
<th>Credo</th>
<th>Sanctus</th>
<th>Benedictus</th>
<th>Agnus Dei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>G (D)</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part II: Leading a 19th-Century Choral-Orchestral Performance

Chapter I: The Role of the Conductor in the late 19th Century

At the beginning of the 19th century, “it was not clear what exactly the conductor was supposed to do, whether he should face the audience or the players and whether he was necessary at all.” Yet evidence suggests that by the middle of the century, conducting was quite commonplace, particularly for large works. Nineteenth-century musicians had different beliefs and methodologies about the role of the conductor, and conducting took different forms depending upon the location and the performance venue. This chapter will investigate the evolution of the 19th-century conductor, citing Bruckner’s practices when known. The role of the conductor during the 19th century evolved from time-beater to artistic interpreter, so much so that by the middle of the century, conducting, as we now know it, was becoming more the norm.

a. Conducting Technique

One topic of debate on conducting during the 19th century is still being discussed today: to beat or not to beat? In other words, is the conductor’s job to keep time, or to express and interpret the music? In a letter from 1868, Franz Liszt (one of the most prominent 19th-century conductors) stated, “The conductor has the chief part to play. He, as the chief virtuoso and artifex, is called upon to see that the whole is harmoniously articulated and that it receives a living form.” In this instance, Liszt was speaking to conductor Johann von Herbeck who conducted the Vienna premier of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor in 1867.
Cheironomy, the use of hand gestures to indicate melodic shape, had been practiced at least as far back as the Middle Ages. Conducting as profession, however, did not yet exist in the early 19th-century. Louis Spohr published a few basic beat patterns in his *Violinschule* of 1831, but the treatise contains no specific instructions on conducting. Hector Berlioz is generally regarded as an originator of conducting technique. His treatise on conducting, *Le chef d’orchestre: Théorie de son art*, was published in 1856.

In this treatise, Berlioz recognized that no fundamental description of the various duties and roles of a conductor existed previously. He even felt the need to address the basic aspect of tuning: “The conductor must therefore take the greatest care to see that the players tune up. This operation should not be done in public.”\(^{19}\) He continued:

The conductor must be able to both see and hear; he must be agile and energetic; he must know the construction, principles and range of the instruments; he must be able to read a score and must have, besides the special talent whose ingredients we shall attempt to describe, other almost indefinable gifts without which an invisible bond cannot be struck between him and those whom he directs; without them the ability to convey his feelings will slip from him completely. He is not then a leader and a director, but simply a time-beater – assuming that he can beat time and divide the bar into regular units.\(^{20}\)

Berlioz goes on to say, “the musicians must share his feelings, his perceptions and his emotions. He will radiate the vital spark of music. But if he is lifeless and cold, he paralyses everything around him.”\(^{21}\) Clearly, by the middle of the century, some conductors were starting to lead a personal interpretation of the music.
Daniel J. Koury’s book, *Orchestral Performance Practices in the Nineteenth Century: Size, Proportions, and Seating* is an excellent source on the topic of the 19th-century conductor. In it, he discusses the evolution of conducting in the 19th century and the notion of what he calls “double direction” (the notion of having more than one conductor). According to Koury, a “time-beater” and either a violin conductor or a keyboard conductor could perform double direction.22

George Hogarth, Honorary Secretary of the London’s Philharmonic Society from 1850-64 described the way in which double direction worked from the founding of the Society in 1813:

The duty of the leader was not only to execute his own part with exemplary accuracy and firmness, but also to attend to all the other performers, who were to look to him for the time of the movements, and to be governed by his beat. His coadjutor, at the pianoforte, and with the full score before him, was to watch the performance and to be ready to correct any mistake. This method, borrowed from the usages (far from uniform) of foreign theatrical and other orchestras, was liable to obvious objections. Neither of these functionaries could efficiently perform his duties separately, and they could not perform them jointly without interfering and clashing with each other. The leader could not execute his own part properly, and at the same time attend to, and beat time to, the whole band; while the person at the pianoforte could scarcely exercise and influence on the “going” of the performance without coming into collusion with the leader.23

Koury goes on to say that “[i]n reading Berlioz’s *Mémoires*, one has to wonder whether Meyerbeer was a violin conductor. On a trip to Germany that began in 1841, Berlioz wrote to Habeneck concerning the Berlin Opera:”

Chorus and orchestra were at full strength – 120 voices, 28 violins, double wind – and Meyerbeer in command at the first desk. I was eager to see him conduct, especially to see him conduct his own work. He does it as a man would a job he has been doing for twenty years; he holds the orchestra in the hollow of his hand and does with it as he pleases.24
Given the fact that violin conducting was quite commonplace, the first conductors did not use a baton, but rather, the violin bow. This is discussed in a treatise on conducting by Edouard Deldevez in 1878:

It is incontestable that, among the players of the orchestra, the instrumentalist whose right arm is most disposed to managing time is that of the violinist. Besides let one point out, it is easy to perceive in it, an aptitude more or less real, more or less particular, in the manner of holding the bow, of positioning the arm and marking the time. Always the arm movements in effect, a directive action more communicative, more intimately tied to performance, for he seems to perform himself…the piano is particularly the instrument of the composer; the violin is the natural instrument of the conductor.

At the same time, the baton was making progress. At Leipzig’s Gewandhaus in 1831-32, Wagner noted that only vocal (meaning choral-orchestral) works had a baton conductor. For a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the first three movements were conductor-less, “played straight through like a Haydn symphony, as well as the orchestra could manage it.” For the fourth movement, the conductor Pohlenz “took his place at the desk” but was overwhelmed by the difficulties of the piece, especially in the double bass recitative, until a veteran of the orchestra prevailed upon him to “put down the baton, and in this way the recitative really proceeded properly.”

In a letter to Wagner dated June 21, 1869, Hans von Bülow claimed to conduct better because of practice with the baton for a performance of Tristan und Isolde. By the end of the century, Felix Weingartener took baton practice even further. “His conducting was unostentatious and precise, and his elegant gestures were a household word…Weingartener was the first conductor who
was said to practice his gestures in front of a mirror.”

Other conducting conventions of the nineteenth century included things that musicians of today would find rather humorous, despite the fact that they were very practical. Noisy conducting was popular early in the century. Koury cites an article from 1803 on conducting opera that acknowledged that “through foot-stamping or audible raps with the baton or bow” errors “against the beat” could be stopped. “This quite usual way of keeping opera personnel in time is, however, not the best, and to the public it is often as annoying as the error itself.”

Koury goes on to reference a story about Berlioz conducting the orchestra in Naples at San Carlo in 1831. He found them to be “excellent, compared with those I had encountered until then.” Yet he found fault. “The highly disagreeable noise made by the conductor tapping with his bow on the desk was another point I was disposed to criticize; but I was told that without it his musicians would sometimes have been hard put to it to play in time.”

Conducting direction was also an interesting question in the 19th-century. A conductor did not normally face the stage with his back to the audience until late in the century. Habeneck conducted mostly “with his face to the public.” In 1829, when Mendelssohn conducted Bach’s St. Matthew Passion for the first time, he faced diagonally across the stage. “His movements were short and decided, and generally hardly visible, for he turned his right side to the orchestra.”
Early in the century, the conductor did not use the full score, but rather, a reduction. The full score was seen as an “almost useless impediment” due to the page-turns. But as the century progresses, Berlioz considered the ability to read a score essential:

The man who makes use of a simplified score or of a mere first violin part, as is often done, especially in France, cannot detect half the mistakes that are made; and when he does point out an error, he is open to counterattack by the player in question, who may riposte, “What do you know about it? You haven’t got my part there.” And that is the least disadvantage of this deplorable system.

b. Rehearsal Technique

The music of composers such as Berlioz, Liszt, Wagner, and Bruckner presented new technical challenges to the orchestral players of their day. In his orchestration treatise, Berlioz stated that the conductor “must correct everyone’s errors and shortcomings in rehearsal and organize his available resources so as to get the maximum benefit possible.” He goes on to say, “the necessity for rehearsal is so little understood that the careful use of time must be regarded as one of the most pressing requirements of the conductor’s art.”

Berlioz noted his disapproval concerning current practices in choral-orchestral rehearsals for large works: “[I] regret [that] choral and orchestral rehearsals everywhere are still so badly run. The practice of massed rehearsals for big choral and instrumental works persists everywhere. The whole chorus is rehearsed at the same time as the instruments.” He goes on to say, “Dreadful mistakes and countless howlers are made, especially in the inner parts unnoticed by the chorus-master and the conductor. Once established, these mistakes
degenerate into regular practice and survive right through the performance.”

Of all of the conductors, Berlioz reserved particular disdain for the rehearsal techniques of 19th-century chorus-masters:

Of all the performers the unfortunate chorus is much the worst treated during rehearsals, such that they are. Instead of getting a good conductor, who knows how to beat time and who knows about singing, to give the beat and make comments, a good pianist playing from a well arranged vocal score on a good piano, and a good violinist to play in unison or an octave above each vocal part as they are learnt separately – instead of these three indispensable musicians they are entrusted, in two thirds of the opera houses in Europe, to just one man who has no more idea how to conduct than to sing, not much of a musician, picked from the worst pianists they can find, or, more likely, who does not play the piano at all…using his right hand to give the chorus the wrong rhythm and his left hand to give them the wrong notes.38

One novel solution cultivated to raise the level of performance was the introduction of sectional rehearsals. In Liszt’s day, sectionals must have been quite rare, for he suggested their use to prospective conductors of his Symphonic Poems: “To achieve a performance of my orchestral works that corresponds to the composer’s intentions…sectional rehearsals, which are most efficient and minimize lost time, are recommended before the dress rehearsal.”39

Berlioz was an advocate for sectional rehearsals as well:

A faithful, well shaped, inspired interpretation of a modern work, even in the hands of artists of a high order, can only be obtained, I firmly believe, from sectional rehearsals. Each choral part must be rehearsed on its own until it is well learnt before joining the ensemble. The same procedure is to be followed for an orchestra learning a quite complicated symphony. The violins should be rehearsed alone first; then the violas, cellos and basses, then the woodwind (with a small group of strings to fill the gaps and cue the wind for their entries), then the brass in the same way. It is very often to rehearse the percussion on their own, even the harps, if there is a group of them. Full rehearsals are then much more productive and more efficient, and one may pride oneself on thus achieving a fidelity of
interpretation whose rarity is alas all too well attested.\textsuperscript{40}

Conductors sometime even stopped in a performance if something fell apart, treating the concert as a type of rehearsal: “If the mood took him, [Liszt] would even treat performances as if they were rehearsals, and if serious mistakes occurred, he would spring up from the podium and shout to the players to return to such and such a place. Far from being disturbed, the audience would applaud this sign of vigilance.”\textsuperscript{41}

d. Bruckner the Conductor

The general trends in conducting noted by Liszt and Berlioz confirm what is known of Bruckner as a conductor. Oppressed under Napoleonic rule at the beginning of the 19th century, the German middle class found several outlets for fostering opposition to the invader and developing a strongly nationalistic feeling. Among these were the \textit{Liedertafel} organizations – male singing societies – the first of which was founded in Berlin in 1809 by Karl Friedrich Zelter.\textsuperscript{42} The movement started later in Austria, with the founding of the \textit{Wiener Männergesangverein} in 1843.\textsuperscript{43} The movement eventually spread from Vienna, and in 1845 the \textit{Liedertafel “Frohsinn”} was organized in Linz. Early in 1856, the \textit{Frohsinn} accepted a new member into its ranks: the recently appointed organist, Anton Bruckner. In 1860, Anton Storch, the \textit{Frohsinn’s} conductor, moved back to Vienna, and the \textit{Liedertafel} approached Bruckner to be his successor. Bruckner was unanimously elected \textit{Chormeister} on November 7, 1860.\textsuperscript{44}

Bruckner took his job as conductor very seriously. According to Albrecht,
“In rehearsals he was very exacting. Rehearsing each part individually, Bruckner placed much importance on enunciation, correct breathing and, above all, on the achievement of a delicate pianissimo.”\(^{45}\) Bruckner was so consumed during the rehearsal process that he was bathed in perspiration. He was known to always bring a fresh set of underclothes with him in order to change after rehearsal.\(^{46}\) He had great success as a choral conductor - after a concert on December 20, 1860, the press complimented the “excellent development of the chorus.”\(^{47}\) The *Linzer Zeitung* also noted, “in him we recognize a man who can lead [the *Frohsinn*] to fame and honor.”\(^{48}\)

An account of a performance reveals details about Bruckner’s tenure with the *Frohsinn*. The nationalistic spirit in Germany inspired the weeklong *Deutsches Sängerfest* in Nüremburg (July 19-24, 1861). The climactic moments of the festival were the mass chorus numbers, sung by 5,300 amateur vocalists from all of the German-speaking regions of Europe. The *Frohsinn* sent forty-eight singers to this festival. Bruckner chose *Wachet auf*, a nationalistic work by Kücken. But, as the members of the *Frohsinn* walked on stage to sing for an audience of 12,000 people, many of them, including Bruckner, were seized with stage fright. Bruckner, suddenly consumed by worry, whispered to the singers, “Let’s not sing *Wachet auf*; we’ll do *Waldeinsamkeit* instead.”\(^{49}\) But the president of the group would not hear of a change and pushed Bruckner toward the conductor stand.

The performance had its faults. The bass soloist sang with increasingly
sharp intonation through the course of his solo. The chorus then had to accommodate the new key, raising the tenor I part above C5. This dramatic situation allegedly excited the enormous audience, who interrupted the music three times with applause. By the end, Bruckner was dripping with perspiration and received an ovation. Despite these small blunders, Herbeck rushed up to Bruckner afterwards and put his arm around him saying, “I cannot prepare a chorus any better than that.”50 Thus, Bruckner was given recognition by the country’s most important conductor of the time.

After a break of several years from leading the Frohsinn to devote more time to composition, Bruckner resumed the position in 1868. In seeking a work to perform at their spring concert, Bruckner turned to Wagner. Wagner recommended that he give the first performance of the final scene of the as yet un-produced opera, Die Meistersinger. The concert took place on April 4, 1868. The entire program included the “March and Entry of the Guests” from Tannhaüser, Schumann’s Ritournell and Bruckner’s own Vaterlandslied of 1866.51 This performance was one of Bruckner’s greatest successes as conductor of the Frohsinn, but it was also one of his last. Soon after, he moved to Vienna. From this point, he continued conducting premiers of his own compositions.
Chapter II. Logistical Elements: Seating and Stage Placement

Koury states that “in many cases a ‘seating plan’ could be better called a ‘standing plan, for the eighteenth-century practice of standing to play in concert situations still prevailed in many places in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to establish exactly how widespread the practice was, for it is seldom mentioned in accounts, probably being taken for granted.”\textsuperscript{52} Having orchestral players stand was a convention that was specific to concert performance and not to the theater. An account by one of the oldest members of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra was quoted in an article in the \textit{Leipzig Tageblatt} on October 1, 1893: “In the Gewandhaus we are wholly different people than in the theater; in black dress coat and standing erect at the desk, surrounded by the finely bedecked society in the hall, a different, higher spirit dominates us.”\textsuperscript{53} The practice was widespread, and documentation proves that in some places it lasted through to the end of the century. In fact, the violins and violas in Leipzig did not sit to play until about ten years after Artur Nikisch’s tenure as conductor began in about 1905.\textsuperscript{54} The following sketch of this orchestra from 1840 corroborates this practice.
For choral-orchestral performances, the manner in which orchestras and choruses were arranged in concert in the 19th century is well known. The fact that the chorus was virtually always placed in front of the orchestra is irrefutable. Pictures and diagrams of festival oratorio performances reveal that the standard performance procedure of the 19th century positioned the chorus near the front of the stage.

According to the New Grove article on “Orchestra,” diagrams “almost always show the violins at the front of the orchestra, facing one another on opposite sides. The winds were often placed on risers, sometimes quite steep, in the rear, with the brass at the very back. Violas, cellos and basses might be found almost anywhere.”  The chorus was still, “placed in front of the orchestra or at
the sides. The conductor of a concert orchestra usually stood in the center of the orchestra, among the instrumentalists.” Also, “often the conductor faced the audience.”
Koury references the plan that Habeneck used for the Société des Concerts (Figure 2). The date of the plan is c. 1828, when the society was founded.

This seating plan was noted for its understanding of “sonorous effect” with which Habeneck had “disposed according to principle” the instruments and chorus. The percussion were “at the summit of the tiers” with all the brass forming “a homogeneous group”; the woodwinds are “joined together”; the cellos and basses “Form a perfect triangle.” The stage is “bordered” by the violas; the violins, “divided in two parts,” form a “square elbow towards the footlights”; in the center are the harp, the bass voices, and the piano. The tenors and sopranos are on the two sides of the “proscenium,” with the soloists separating them. The conductor, “who takes in with a glance the different divisions of his sonorous army, directs it with admirable ease and unity of movement.”

Figure 2:

Elwart/SOCIÉTÉ, reproduced from Koury, Orchestral Performance Practices, 204.
The next example (Figure 3) appeared in the *Musical World* on March 26, 1840. One difficulty with this plan is, “Hebeneck stood between two groups of choral singers, who would be obligated to turn their heads very considerably to see his beat.” Berlioz confirmed this observation:

In the Paris Conservatoire, where the amphitheater has only four or five steps (not forming a semicircle), the violins and the violas are on the stage, and only the basses and wind instruments occupy the steps; the chorus is seated in the front of the stage, looking toward the audience. All the sopranos and altos are unable to see the movements of the conductor, since their backs are turned directly toward him. The arrangement is very inconvenient for this part of the chorus.

Figure 3:

A solution evolved to resolve the issue of the chorus not being able to see the conductor. Rather than moving the chorus behind the orchestra as we do today, the convention evolved to use two, or in some cases more, conductors. One illustration that appeared in the Leipzig Illustrated News on September 16, 1865 depicts this (Figure 4). The large chorus is positioned at the front of the stage. There are two Kapellmeisters, or conductors, and the orchestra is arched in the back with the strings first and the brass and woodwinds on platforms behind them. The organ console is at the back of the stage.

Figure 4:

Another seating plan from Georg Schünemann’s *Geschichte des Dirigierens* was used in the 1842 performance of Haydn’s *Creation* at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna (Figure 5). The example is unique in that it requires a first and second director in addition to a third keyboard director, and two separate directors for the first and second violins: five directors in all.
Figure 5:

But what of seating in the church? Since the physical layout of a church can offer special problems, it seems appropriate to discuss it separately. The position of the organ is the first and usually largest consideration. Figure 6 shows a plan for a Dresden church c. 1844. Koury states that, “[h]ere the organ formed a separation between the strings on one side and the winds and chorus on the other. Basses and cellos are on both wings; basses also seem to be to the front on both sides of the conductor.” Schünemann addresses the direction in which the conductor faced, though whether by inference or discovery is not clear. He claimed that the conductor turned his back to the main body of instruments, “since in the performance of a Mass he had to see the celebrating clerics. The choir stood to his right, while trumpets and timpani were placed on side-balconies.” Here “to his right” clearly meant as he faced the altar and not from the audience’s standpoint; this question has already been alluded to before.
Figure 6:

The next seating plan is from a *Concert spirituel* in Vienna from 1846 (Figure 7). The orchestra is arranged around the organ. This is another case where neither the solo singers nor the chorus can see the conductor unless they turn their heads. This example is particularly relevant to this project because it is quite similar to the space utilized in the April 10, 2010 performance at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, NY.

Figure 7:

The final piece of pictorial evidence considered here is a photograph of the conductor Siegfried Ochs and the Berlin Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra from November 14, 1907 (Figure 8). Although this is a posed photograph, it confirms what the previous seating plans acknowledged – that the chorus was placed in front of the orchestra. In addition to confirming this fact, the most fascinating element of this picture is the date, 1907. Clearly this set-up was still in practice even into the 20th century.

Figure 8:
The specific seating plan for the premier of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor is unknown. However, taking into account the established tradition and also pictures of the interior of the Old Linz Cathedral, where the piece was premiered, one can deduce several viable arrangements (Figure 9).

Figure 9:

The choir stalls are at the front right and left and the Bruckner organ is located in the west gallery (Figures 10 and 11). Most likely, the choir performed from the stalls, and the orchestra was arranged in the center. The organist was left to play off on the side and had to coordinate with the musicians on the ground floor.

Figure 10:
Figure 11:

The Bruckner organ in the old Linz cathedral. Public domain photo.

The April 10, 2010 took place at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, New York (Figure 12).
Figure 12:

As mentioned earlier, the inside of this sanctuary is like that of Figure 7, with the organ at the back and the winds on elevated platforms (Figure 13).

Figure 13:

The strings (with the exception of the cellos) played standing and were arranged in an arch formation with violin I and II facing each other. Violas and cellos were placed in the middle. The basses stood around the perimeter of the string section. The winds and horns were raised up on platforms above the strings (a necessity when the strings are standing to the left), and the brass was in a similar position behind the strings to the right. The timpani were in the rear to the left. The organ console was center and the organist faced the back of the church and watched with a mirror. The chorus was placed in front of the orchestra, partially on steps at the front of the sanctuary and partially on risers. In addition to their solo parts, the quartet sang with the choir and was placed at the center of the group (Figure 14).
Figure 14:

Photograph during the April 11, 2010 performance of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Rochester, NY. Performance utilized organ (back center), full orchestra, and a chorus of over 160 singers, SATB soloists, a main conductor and a sub-conductor. Photo by Leslie Scatterday.
The performance utilized two conductors. The chorus conductor mirrored my gestures to keep the performance together (Figure 15).

Figure 15:
This arrangement was very similar to that seen in this picture of a Berlioz concert in 1844 showing a main conductor and a sub-conductor (Figure 16).

Figure 16:

Chapter III: Musical Elements

Logistical issues form only one small part of this study. Perhaps the more interesting research deals with how to interpret and, in turn, perform the music of the 19th century. Three issues are central to the discussion of the performance of 19th-century music. They are heard consistently in early recordings of all kinds, and are discussed in primary sources such as Manuel Garcia’s *Treatise on the Art of Singing* and Siegfried Ochs’ *Der deutsche Gesangverein*. These are:

1. Choice of Tempo and Tempo Freedom
2. Variety of Tone and Vibrato
3. Instrumental and Vocal Portamento

Each of these issues will be discussed in turn.

a. Freedom of Tempo

Tempo is among the most variable and difficult issues in musical performance. The majority of musicians deem choosing their own tempo a right and give minimal thought to historical considerations. In his book *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900*, Clive Brown states, “every sensitive musician is aware that the quest for historically appropriate tempos must essentially be concerned with plausible parameters rather than with precisely delineated or very narrowly defined absolute tempos.”65 He goes on to say that “[m]any psychological and aesthetic factors, as well as the varying physical conditions in which performance takes place, militate against the notion that a piece of music should be rigidly bound to a single immutable tempo.”66 This
chapter will discuss tempo in two ways: first, the choice of tempo and second, freedom of tempo or tempo manipulation.

Brown’s book makes the case that the idea of intuiting the proper tempo or “feeling it” was popular with progressive composer-conductors such as Liszt and Wagner towards the end of the 19th century. According to Brown, “With regard to tempo Wagner trusted the instincts of the conductor who was in tune with his general principles and with the dramatic meaning of the music.”

Wagner was quite opinionated on the subject of tempo, stating, “If one wants to summarize what the correct performance of a piece of music is for a conductor, it is based on his always setting the right tempo; for the choice and determination of that tempo immediately allows us to recognize whether the conductor understood the musical composition or not.”

Mendelssohn “never varied the tempo when once taken, [and] did not always take a movement at the same pace, but changed it as his mood was at the time.” Mendelssohn was reluctant in supplying metronome markings for his music, and this quote perhaps illustrates why. However, many 19th-century musicians did choose to print metronome markings in their scores. This did not mean, however, that they insisted that performers would stick to them. For example, “Saint-Saëns recalled that when he heard Berlioz conduct a performance of his Grande messe des morts several of the tempos were quite different from the ones printed in the score: the moderato (quarter=96) at the beginning of the Dies Irae was more like an allegro and the andante maestoso
(quarter=72) following, like a moderato.”

The first edition of the Brahms Requiem contained metronome numbers for every movement, provided by the composer himself, yet Brahms had them removed in all later editions. Brahms commented repeatedly that the metronome encouraged mechanical performances. He said on one occasion, “a normal person would take a different tempo each week.”

Bruckner provided no metronome markings in his Mass in D Minor, but rather included a time signature and a tempo term for each movement. For example, he marked the Kyrie, “alla breve mehr langsam.” Bruckner’s choice of words denotes that he wishes the movement to be beat in two, but cautions the conductor not to take the tempo too fast.

As discussed earlier, Bruckner was a conductor himself, and in the name of respecting his choice of meters, each movement in the April 10, 2010 performance was conducted in the meter prescribed by the composer. This made for occasional challenges, particularly in the Kyrie (many conductors advised to take it in four rather than the prescribed two) and the Hosanna (the transition into the fast tempo change made it tempting to take in two). In the end, I decided to remain faithful to Bruckner’s meter choices because they represented the nature of the music rather than the pattern that would achieve the most precise performance. A chart of Bruckner’s meters and tempo terms for the entire Mass in D Minor is included in Table III.
### Table III: Bruckner’s Mass in D minor; Time Signatures and Tempi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kyrie</th>
<th>cut-time (alla breve)</th>
<th>mehr langsamer</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>allegro ritardando</td>
<td>mm. 63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amen fugue</td>
<td></td>
<td>meno mosso</td>
<td>m. 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
<td>m. 117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>etwas langsamer</td>
<td>m. 162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credo</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Moderato ritardando</td>
<td>mm. 67-68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et incarnates est</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Langsam</td>
<td>m. 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Allegro ritardando</td>
<td>m. 113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
<td>m. 212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>m. 215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctus</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Maestoso</td>
<td>m. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosanna</td>
<td>cut-time</td>
<td>Allegro moderato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benedictus</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Moderato</td>
<td>m. 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosanna</td>
<td>cut-time</td>
<td>Allegro Moderato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei</td>
<td>4/4</td>
<td>Andante quasi Allegretto</td>
<td>m. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miserere nobis</td>
<td></td>
<td>langsamer</td>
<td>m. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
<td>mm. 58-61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnus Dei</td>
<td></td>
<td>accelerating</td>
<td>m. 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dona nobis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tempo I</td>
<td>m. 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allegro moderato</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flexibility of tempo is another important factor in 19th-century performance practice. The sense of freedom and spontaneity heard in a number of period recordings presents itself most immediately in regard to tempo. Most tempo rubato was not marked in the score, but according to Brown, “holding back some notes and hurrying others was not merely permissible but was an indispensable adjunct of sensitive performance.”

Two types of rubato existed. One involved maintaining a basic pulse in the accompanimental texture while the melody wandered from the beat. Chopin was known for this type of rubato, and many of his solo piano pieces were
performed in this way. The other type was associated especially with Liszt and Wagner. In this tempo rubato, the overall texture either slows or rushes ahead – the tempo changes for a short period of time. Later 19th-century conductors apparently used this second type of tempo rubato a great deal. The fact that Liszt incorporated frequent tempo fluctuations in his conducting was well known. An 1826 article by Lichtenhthal on the metronome in his *Dizionario e bibliografia della musica* stated, “If the beat is always kept with an extreme exactness, a perfect ensemble is necessarily achieved. But such a symmetrical and square performance lacks magic. One should deck the yoke that is imposed on the beat with flowers, and from time to time free oneself from it with felicitous license.”

But how does a 21st-century conductor know how and where to employ the extensive rubato that would have been considered tasteful and effective in Bruckner’s day? A list from 1839 by Carl Czerny invites a modification of tempo. It states that a ritardando or rallentando is used:

1. At transitional moments;
2. On the diminuendo of a quick lively passage;
3. In a well-marked crescendo serving as introduction or wind-up to an important passage;
4. When the composer marks the passage *espressivo*;
5. In passages where the composer or performer gives free play to his fancy.
Another phenomenon Czerny mentions is the interrelationship between tempo and dynamic changes. Recordings demonstrate that in the late 19th century and early 20 century, louder could mean faster and softer could mean slower. Dynamics and tempi were natural partners. If this practice were common, a composer would have no need to mark tempo changes in the score because it would be clear to any musician who grew up with this sort of practice.

In 1833 J. Feski observed:

Ritardando and accelerando alternate all the time. This manner has already become so fixed in the minds of the musical public that they believe a diminuendo must be slowed down and a crescendo speeded up; a tender phrase (e.g. in an allegro) will be performed more slowly, a powerful one faster. At times this kind of treatment may well be applicable but how to determine where requires very deep insight into the composition and very correct feeling. Furthermore, the compositions of the older composers tolerate this type of treatment extremely rarely, and the newer ones are well enough endowed with markings of this kind! In these, on the other hand, one misses the exalted calm, in which the older composers distinguished themselves.

Brahms commented a number of times that a first performance of a work in a given place would be the time to underline the structure of a piece through marked tempo changes within movements, whereas when the work became more familiar to the public this kind of exaggeration would not be needed. This concept of many viable interpretations is totally foreign to the 20th-century quest for perfection.

A limited number of published scores that Brahms himself used in performance are available. The most notable score is the one that he used to conduct Ein deutsches Requiem in Vienna (Figure 17).
Figure 17:

Brahms Requiem. Brahms’ conductor’s score.
One might notice the addition of a fermata and two tempo markings: *breit* and *tempo viv* - all in Brahms’ own hand. Although he did not add much, Brahms the conductor was adding tempo modifications that Brahms the composer had not provided in the published score.79

Brown states that, “the consequences of this [tempo rubato] can be heard in early recordings, for instance Arthur Nikisch’s (1855-1922) interpretation in 1913 of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.”80 A recording of this performance is on Track I of the accompanying CD. Upon listening, one can observe the tempo fluctuations that occur, specifically between the first and second themes.

Keeping these things in mind, I viewed the end of the “Et incarnates est” in the Credo of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor as an opportunity for tempo flexibility, specifically *rallentando*. A recording of the Credo, specifically the *et incarnatus est* from the April 10, 2010 performance, is on the accompanying CD. As the recording demonstrates (Track 2, 2:00-4:06), the use of *rallentando* adds to the expressive nature of the passage and highlights the changes in harmony.

The Et resurrexit section is a place for accelerando. This section begins with a twenty-eight measure orchestral introduction, an exciting and whirling depiction of the resurrection. The tempo marking at the beginning of this section is allegro, and given the way the music builds through these bars, an accelerando enhances the drama and excitement. Track 2 (5:57-6:53) provides an example of this passage from the April 10 performance.
In summary, Brown’s philosophy of informed tempos having “plausible parameters” is a good starting point when dealing with music of the 19th century. The “right” tempo depends on many factors that run the gamut from logistical considerations, such as the acoustic of the performance space, to subjective factors, such as the mood of the conductor. Metronome markings are meant to be guides and should in no way bind a performer to a “perfect” tempo that must be recreated in every performance. In fact, the general consensus among 19th-century musicians was that various performances of the same piece can and should have a range of suitable tempos. Once started, most pieces in the repertoire have flexibility with tempo variation. Manipulating the tempo is expressive and can help the audience more quickly understand the structure of the piece upon the first hearing. Czerny’s guidelines for tempo rubato provide modern performers with parameters for when and where to include this expressive device, although, even he ends this list of rules by stating that it is also admissible “[i]n passages where the composer or performer gives free play to his fancy.” Musicians may read this as license to create, explore, and be musical.

b. Tone Quality and Vibrato

Before the 20th century, neither vocal nor instrumental vibrato were a continuous part of tone production but rather they were used as a expressive tools. According to Brown, “[d]uring the period from 1750 to 1900 the various types of vibrato then in use were regarded almost exclusively as ornamental.”

Violinists such as Joseph Joachim and his most important student Leopold Auer,
as well as major singing pedagogue Manuel Garcia, all despaired at the introduction of noticeable and constant vibrato. For them, this was clearly an affectation that covered up the lack of true artistry and control. There seems to have been a consensus among musical authorities of the time that “the basic sound should be a steady one and that vibrato, along with other ornamental techniques, should occur as an incidental coloring or embellishment on particular notes.”

A constant vibrato was seen as either a technical fault or a sign of a good singer past his or her prime. The basic belief was that something constant could no longer be expressive. According to Garcia’s singing treatises, the first of which came from 1840, singers should strive for “a steadiness of sound” which he defines as “a firm and continuous flow of sound, free from every sort of tremor or quavering.”

Garcia was one of the most influential pedagogues of the 19th century. His father, Manuel Garcia I, and sisters, Maria Malibran and Pauline Viardot, were enormously successful opera singers. He taught singing for nearly fifty years at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where he invented the laryngoscope, and his students included famed soprano Jenny Lind, the important teacher Matilde Marchesi, and Julius Stockhausen, who premiered the baritone solo in Brahms’s Requiem. Certainly, there were singers who used noticeable, constant vibrato, or Garcia would not have commented on it. However, Garcia’s treatises point to the fact that he did not encourage constant vibrato in his students.
Sir Henry Wood, in his 1927 book *The Gentle Art of Singing*, gave an interesting account of the increase of vibrato in singing:

There has been a good deal written and said lately about the vocal tremolo [vibrato], which is out of place, but it is no new fault. I think I have explained fairly clearly why it exists, and how it can be cured. It is not taken in hand at the very first singing lesson, it grows rapidly into a habit, and becomes so firmly established that it is most difficult to eradicate and is always liable to crop up from time to time. A tremolo often reaches the audience as out-of-tuneness and any teacher who has tried to teach the octave duet for soprano and mezzo soprano, *Agnus Dei* in Verdi’s *Requiem*, to singers of whom one has a decided tremolo and the other a true even, still tone, will understand why. It is impossible to get the octaves to sound in tune. The voice with the tremolo never blends in with the still tones of the other. The sharpness and flatness of the tremolo become clear.

As for string playing, J. Winram’s book *Violin Playing and Violin Adjustment* (1908) observed of vibrato (for which he still used the old English term ‘close shake’): “it should be judiciously used at all times, as it is quite possible to have too much of a good thing. Beethoven’s music will sound lovely with very little close shake, or is preferred with none at all whereas Wagner’s will gain rather than lose by its introduction. The character of the music must be taken into consideration, and good taste will surely be sufficient guide.”

Leopold Auer felt similarly about vibrato, stating, “[Violinists’] musical taste does not tell them that they can reduce a programme of the most dissimilar pieces to the same dead level of monotony by peppering them all with the tabasco of continuous vibrato. No, the vibrato is an effect, an embellishment; it can lend a touch of divine pathos to the climax of a phrase or the course of a passage, but only if the player has cultivated a delicate sense of proportion in the use of it.”
In around 1880, the anonymous author of *Hints to Violin Playing* linked the habit of continuous vibrato to bad taste and poor technique:

The close shake is an imitation of that tremulous wave which often comes unbidden into the human voice during the performance of a strained note. Some singers, through ignorance or pernicious training, introduce this wave so often that they eventually lose all control of the voice, and cannot sing a note without the detestable and irritating quiver rattling through it. Many good tenor and treble singers remain in the second or third class, which might easily advance to the first, but for this wretched and damning tremola. A singer thus afflicted, or a harmonium with the tremola stop out, are the two things that any one with a sensitive ear wishes to be away from. On the violin this tremola or close shake is not nearly so intolerable, yet even there it is often sadly overdone, and many violinists, like the singers above noted, seem to lose all control of their left hand, and cannot play a long note without the persistent trembling. My earnest injunction, therefore, to the student before trying to throw a little light on the study, is, master the close shake, but do not let the close shake master you.\(^{88}\)

Regarding ensemble music, Brown states that “orchestral string and wind sections would have naturally played without vibrato unless it was so marked.”\(^{89}\) Continuous vibrato was not introduced into orchestral string playing until early in the 20\(^{th}\) century. Most vibrato techniques were essentially for soloists. Brown states that “[t]he view that vibrato was detrimental in ensemble playing seems to have been generally acknowledged.”\(^{90}\)

It may be legitimate to presume, however, that this did not necessarily preclude their use in ensemble music by instruments that momentarily took on a soloistic role. Thus, in performing string quartets, German violinist Louis Spohr (1784-1859) insisted that only when the player “has a decided solo part, and the other instruments merely an accompaniment, can he be allowed to embellish in the ordinary manner of solo pieces.”\(^{91}\) Furthermore, in orchestral playing he
instructed the string player to abstain from “everything appertaining to the embellishment of solo playing which, if transferred to the orchestra, would destroy all unity of performance.”

The vibrato used by singers on early recordings shows similar variation to that used by violinists. Some singers use continuous vibrato while others use it minimally. However, in almost all cases, the vibrato is very narrow and controlled and according to Brown, “seems to be a vibrato of intensity rather than one of pitch.”

Vibrato was viewed as a form of ornamentation; therefore, the early 19th-century reaction against vibrato was “not against a technique that was used to color the tone continuously (something that was certainly unknown in those terms), but may rather be seen as a part of a growing rejection of excessive ornamentation and a move towards an aesthetic in which simplicity of utterance was prized above artifice.” Brown goes on to say, “many musicians and connoisseurs in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century saw expressiveness and emotional truth as higher virtues than the display of dexterity and ingenuity. Such a view was entirely in tune with the spirit of the age which was influenced by Rousseau to prize the directness and naturalness over elaboration and artificiality.”

To modern audiences, long accustomed to hearing singers, instrumentalists, choirs and orchestras perform with continuous vibrato, the suggestion of removing it seems shocking especially in late romantic repertoire.
Today vibrato is considered basic to vocal and (with a few exceptions) instrumental tone production. Achieving more variety of tone for the sake of a modern performance can then be a challenge. Ultimately, for the April 10 performance, the singers and players were instructed to minimize and utilize vibrato at specific moments in the score. Track 2 (4:42-5:41) of the live recording provides an example in the Credo of Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor. Here, the chorus utilizes minimal vibrato to provide harmonic clarity. The chorus sings E fully diminished seventh a capella. The chords harmonies are clearer without vibrato. The harmonic tension is resolved by the orchestra in mm 100-01 with a V-I progression. The solo quartet then echoes this sentiment in mm. 101—05 with a cadence of their own. Here, the soloists started the phrase with minimal vibrato and added more where Bruckner marks an accent over a harmonic change. This reinforces the notion of adding vibrato for solo passages and for expressive purposes.

In summary, in the 19th century, vibrato was seen as an expressive tool meant to be used at choice moments by solo performers. Ensembles, both instrumental and choral, did not employ continuous vibrato. The advent and increase of conservatory training, where singers and violinists were taught to perform like soloists, corresponds to an increase of the use of the constant, steady vibrato, often heard in performers of today. A new standard for proper technique has become the artist’s ability to vibrate on every note. In the 19th century, style informed technique, and today, technique informs style.
c. Portamento – Vocal and Instrumental

The term “portamento,” at its root, means “to carry” the sound. According to Brown, “[i]n singing, string playing, and wind playing “portamento” had two basic connotations: both implied a smooth connection of one sound with another, but this connection could be seen either simply as legato or as a linking of different notes by a more or less audible slide through the intervening pitches.” During the 19th century, it became increasingly common to associate the term “portamento” with a conspicuous slide, “probably reflecting a growing tendency during the first two decades of the century for singers and string players to intensify the use of this technique as an expressive feature of their performance.” Thus, this sort of sliding portamento is the focus of this chapter.

Portamento in violin playing became widespread as early as the 1770s. In Burney’s General History of Music, he observed that the violinist Geminiani “was certainly mistaken in laying it down as a rule that no two notes on the same string, in shifting, should be played with the same finger; as beautiful expressions and effects are produced by great players in shifting, suddenly from a low note to a high, with the same finger on the same string.” Certainly, by the end of the 18th century, portamento had become an adopted technique of many violinists.

Singers also started to incorporate portamento into performance. According to Brown, Manuel Garcia used the terms port de voix and con
portamento ("slur" in the English version) to designate the technique of sliding audibly from one note to another, reserving the term legato for the normal smooth connection between notes. Complaints about the overuse of portamento may be charted from the beginning of the 19th century. A reviewer of operas at the Magdeburg theater in 1798 noted that the prima donna, Toscani, "constantly slid through the in between notes on rising or falling fourths, fifths, or sixths, and since she carried on with this incessantly, with her in any case piping voice, a dreadful meow developed out of what was supposed to be an Italian embellishment."  

In the 19th-century, there were basically two types of portamento: one involved gliding between notes sung to different syllables, or, on string instruments, played in separate bows, or in the case of wind instruments, separately articulated. The other took place between two different pitches on the same syllable, between notes in the same bow, or between smoothly slurred notes.

Portamento initially came from vocal music. This was emphasized in the 1905 Joachim and Moser Violinschule, where it was stated that "as a means borrowed from the human voice...the use and manner of executing portamento must come naturally under the same rules as those which hold good in vocal art." According to Brown, "the employment of portamento in string playing was largely analogous with that in singing." This is important for understanding how singers many have used it, because although there are few clues in vocal
music, “the bowings and fingerings in string music make it more revealing.”

The question of “if” performers of the period used portamento is quite clear; they did. Greater difficulty comes from discerning how much and where it was deemed appropriate. Haydn’s string quartets (op. 33 from 1781-82) contain fingering by the composer and indicate the use of violin portamento for special effects. The operas of Meyerbeer contain many clear instructions for vocal portamento. Wagner included instructions for vocal portamento in his scores. In Der fliegende Holländer, he added the instructions “con portamento” to indicate his wishes. Despite being a competent string player, Mendelssohn did not provide many fingerings in his quartets; however, copies of the pieces contain bowings and fingerings by his close colleague Ferdinand David and suggest portamento.

In addition to scores, recordings from performers who knew late-century composers provide information for analysis. Joachim recorded two of his arrangements of Brahms’s Hungarian dances in 1903, and portamento plays a significant part in these. Elgar’s Violin Concerto, recorded by Marie Hall in 1916 under the direction of the composer contains much portamento, for both the soloist and the orchestra.

Although various early 19th century sources criticize portamento in ensemble music, by the middle years of the century, “it was becoming an established and accepted practice in many orchestras.” Similarly to the use of vibrato, the use of portamento was most likely due to the rise of conservatory
training, which prepared violinists to be soloists, even though their careers would most likely be spent playing in ensembles. As with the use of vibrato, composers assumed that performers would employ portamento tastefully.  

According to Brown, “the frequent and prominent orchestral portamento that can be heard on some of the earliest orchestral recordings probably reflects a practice that had been established for at least a half a century.” A quote from Salieri confirms the spread of the practice to orchestral playing.

This feeble and childish mannerism has, like an infectious disease, spread to some orchestral players and, what is most ridiculous, not merely to our courageous violinists, but also to violists and even double bass players. Because a tolerated evil always gets worse, such a mannerism, particularly in a full orchestra, must necessarily change a harmonious body into a collection of whining children and meowing cats.  

An excellent (or perhaps more accurately, extreme) example of orchestral portamento appears in Mengelberg’s recording of the prelude to Act I of Wagner’s Lohengrin from 1927 (Track 3). Here, portamento is utilized quite heavily. In analyzing this recording, it is important to notice that portamento is added primarily in melodic passages rather those of an accompanying nature. The portamento draws the listeners attention to the given line and adds an expressive element.

If portamento applied to instrumental ensembles, did it apply to vocal ensembles in the 19th century as well? Early 20th-century recordings of choral groups are rare, making them especially valuable. A 1941 recording of the St. Olaf Choir singing Beautiful Savior conducted by their founder and first
conductor F. Melius Christiansen has a great example of choral portamento (Track 4).

What would F. Melius Christiansen’s St. Olaf choir have to do with the European Romantic tradition? Christiansen was a 26-year-old violinist who traveled to Leipzig in 1897— the year of Brahms’ death— to enroll in the Royal Conservatory there. He studied the violin for two years with Hans Sitt and received his diploma in 1899. During those years, he apparently attended every concert and many rehearsals of the St. Thomas Choir in Leipzig, which was then conducted by Gustav Schreck. He then returned to America and eventually built the St. Olaf Choir. It would be hard to find a likelier person to transfer late German Romantic instrumental and choral performance practices to the realm of American choral music. And if we are looking for a choral style that is probably close to what Bruckner would have heard, performed by an excellent choir, it would be hard to come closer than this St. Olaf recording.

Choral portamento is also discussed a number of times in the writings of Siegfried Ochs, a choral conductor from Berlin, who founded the chorus associated with the Berlin Philharmonic. Ochs wrote a series of books called Der Deustche Gesangverein, which were essentially practical journal entries for conductors on problem spots in choral-orchestral masterworks. His entries on choral portamento are inconsistent. He refers to it in one place as an Unart—a bad habit common in bad choirs— but then also gives detailed directions on how to do it— specifically how to slide between notes in the opening choral phrases of
For example, he cites how to train a choir to do portamento on the opening of Brahms’s Requiem by sliding on the “l” in the text “Die da Lied.” The portamento is quite pronounced in the recording of Furtwängler conducting this passage in 1947 (Track 5, 1:15-2:23).

Portamento in choral singing as well as orchestral string playing has been so limited in musical performance for so many years that to modern audiences it tends to sound in poor taste. In Bruckner’s Mass in D Minor, the Benedictus provides countless opportunities for portamento due to its expressive legato lines in both the choral and orchestral parts. The effect of this moment is changed quite dramatically with the addition of portamento. This is evident in the recording from the April 10 performance (Track 6, 2:10-3:20). Here, the soloist uses portamento on the opening phrase of the Benedictus, specifically the “qui,” two notes on one syllable. The chorus uses portamento later in the movement with the falling minor sixth motive on the text, “benedictus,” specifically the “ben.” Similarly to the example recordings, adding portamento here draws the listener’s attention to the melodic line and adds an expressive quality to it. As the line is passed from section to section in the choir and then to the orchestra, the addition of portamento helps the listener to follow it and understand its expressive character.

In summary, like every expressive device, portamento was liable to abuse in the hands of less talented musicians. However, there can be no doubt that by the middle of the 19th century, it had become a freely employed expressive tool.
According to Brown, “[v]irtually all authors who discussed portamento in singing and in string playing stressed the danger of abusing it; but their notion of abuse is directly dependent on what they considered to be the norm.” It remained present in vocal and instrumental technique until well into the 20th century.
Chapter IV: Conclusion

In general, contemporary performers and audiences mistakenly imagine that modern ideas about how to perform Romantic music are roughly congruous with 19th-century ideas and traditions. However, piecing together information about performance practices of the time may help aid the way conductors interpret the score and suggest a new approach to performing the music of the 19th century.

A shift happened in the way we perform music in the mid 20th century. Music became a standardized art, where perfection was valued over expression. Scholars continue to theorize what brought on this shift. Perhaps it was the growth of sound recording, an advance that gave musicians the ability to scrutinize their performances after the fact. Perhaps it was the reign of conductors who recorded frequently, and were known for their precision, such as Arturo Toscanini and Robert Shaw. Perhaps it was the music of the 20th century itself. This increasingly complex music sometime requires a metronomic precision and clarity, and many composers of this period ask performers to do exactly what is on the page.

When performing the music of the 19th century, however, we are dealing with the music of people who valued a different aesthetic. Musicians were encouraged to be expressive in every way possible. Each performance of a piece was to be a different artistic experience aimed to stir the emotions of the audience. My hope is that with increased study of the performance traditions of
the 19th century, musicians today may be freed from the restraints of our time and get in touch with the sound world of the people who composed and performed it. Further research and study will present more options for the performance of this music.

The performance on April 10, 2010 was an enormous undertaking in every possible way. Logistically speaking, choral-orchestral performances tend to be quite complex, due simply to the number of people involved. This performance, of course, had the additional challenge of a pre-concert lecture, seating and logistics unfamiliar to the musicians, the presence and coordination of two conductors, and the implementation of performance techniques that were new to every musician involved in the project.

Encouraging these new techniques was difficult early on in the rehearsal process. The soloists, choir, and string players in the orchestra were accustomed to playing with consistent vibrato, and minimizing this took many, many reminders. Vibrato for them, unlike their 19th-century counterparts, was a ubiquitous part of their technique and achieving a different aesthetic required a significant amount of “undoing” their previously rehearsed approach. The addition of portamento was met with similar resistance. Many of the musicians thought that it sounded silly and even humorous. Several of the string players in the orchestra could not perform it without laughing aloud early on in the rehearsal process. After they realized that I was serious, the players (and the choir) moved on to doing a small amount of portamento in the places that I
requested, but it was hardly audible. At this stage, I resorted, at least with the choir, to practicing portamento out of context. They needed to learn how to do portamento because many of them had no experience with it whatsoever. Once a comfort level was established, the choir and orchestra were able to utilize it with relative ease and eventually even be expressive with it. I was happy to have the luxury of ample rehearsal time to experiment with all of these techniques and let them evolve.

The addition of tempo rubato was a challenge in two ways. First of all, performers of today are accustomed to having ritardandos and accelerandos written in the score. To remedy this problem, I had the choir and orchestra members write in a few of the tempo changes, just to keep everyone relatively together. The second challenge was, of course, coordinating this with two conductors. Greg Ristow, the sub-conductor, and I rehearsed leading and following in a few of the chorus rehearsals the week before the concert. Thankfully, Greg is an extremely sensitive musician and was able to follow every one of my whims quite impressively. By the performance, we were able to add in even more tempo rubato where it was not marked. The musicians became comfortable with being flexible.

The seating was initially a challenge, particularly for the orchestra, but they ultimately had fun with it. This was a significant stretch for them because orchestras today are comfortable playing in only a few standard seating plans. Choirs are much more accustomed to changes in seating. The winds were off to
the left and the brass was off to the right, both on platforms. To make things even more challenging, the acoustic at Sacred Heart Cathedral was quite reverberant, and it was difficult for them to hear one another. We also added the organ, which could only be rehearsed in the final dress rehearsal at the cathedral. (I must admit, I did not tell the violins and violas that they had to stand for the performance until the dress rehearsal!) In the end, no one murdered the conductors (either of them) and, all in all, both the orchestra and the chorus were up for the challenge. This is one of the enormous benefits of working with the level of excellence that we have at the Eastman School of Music.

Despite all of the unknowns, the concert was a huge success. It created quite a buzz among the audience, the musicians, and even the local classical radio station (listen to Tracks 7 and 8 of the CD for a recording of the interview). The overwhelming comment after the performance was, “Why don’t we perform this repertoire with the chorus in front of the orchestra more often?” The audience loved the setup, mostly because this mass has prominent material for the choir and also a heavy orchestration. Arranging the chorus in front of the orchestra allowed for the chorus to sing a haunting pianissimo and also allowed for the orchestra to play fortissimo when marked, rather than having the typical dynamic battle with the chorus constantly striving to be heard and the orchestra being silenced. It was freeing for both groups. The two-conductor set-up also worked quite well. It was advantageous to have one conductor who could give all attention to the orchestra and one who could focus all attention on the chorus.
I have included a recording of the April 10 performance in its entirety. This performance utilized the 19th-century practices and setup. In addition to the CD, I have included a DVD of the April 10 performance, which provides an interesting view of how the two-conductor set-up worked. We had the good fortune to be able to perform this mass twice. The second performance was April 30, 2010 in the Eastman Theater. Although I chose to keep the musical decisions the same, we had to revert to the chorus behind the orchestra for this performance. I have included a recording of this performance for comparison.
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Thanks to my friend and colleague, Dr. Gregory Ristow for conducting the performance with me. Thanks also to Leslie Scatterday for capturing the performance in photographs.

I hope that this project spurs on more of its kind. It was by no means an easy venture, but in my opinion, both the final product and the experience that we all had performing the music in this fashion made it worth it.
Notes:

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37 Ibid., 338.
38 Ibid., 338-364.
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46 Ibid., 12.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
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Recordings


