

ABSTRACT

Title of thesis: CONDUCTING CLASSICISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCES OF BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES

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This thesis explores the orchestral performance practice of the late nineteenth century, specifically how it pertained to conductors' interpretations of Beethoven's symphonies. By this time, two competing conducting styles were widely perceived to have existed with respect to these works: a Classical and a Romantic aesthetic, each of which claimed to best fulfill the composer's intentions. The former stressed the need for transparency with the performer maintaining steady tempi with little interference from the conductor, whereas the latter emphasized the active involvement of the conductor, particularly through wide ranging tempo modifications. While scholars have analyzed written nineteenth-century sources that describe these conducting styles, it is much less clear how they were manifested in actual performances. Likewise, studies of early orchestral recordings tend not to contextualize their findings with nineteenth-century aesthetic debates, preferring instead to contrast these performance styles with those practiced today. By comparing concert reviews to early recordings of Beethoven's symphonies made by conductors born in the nineteenth century, I elucidate precisely how the descriptive language of observers of concerts during the late-Romantic era corresponded to the sounds they heard. I argue that a clear distinction can be made between the Classical and

Romantic approaches to conducting an orchestra, while maintaining that the differences were often more nuanced than observers liked to admit.

CONDUCTING CLASSICISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN LATE NINETEENTH-
CENTURY ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCES OF BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES

By

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2023

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To the memory of my dad

Acknowledgments

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Olga Haldey, for her tireless support and commitment to my project: her expertise on all matters of music was truly inspiring. I also want to thank my committee members Dr. Barbara Hagg-Huglo and Dr. Patrick Warfield for their thoughtful suggestions and enthusiasm about my research. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had such a wonderful committee with such diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. Finally, I want to thank my friends and family, my partner, and my cat, for their interest and support in my academic endeavors.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the relationship between aesthetic and ideological trends in late nineteenth-century Europe, and the stylistic approaches exhibited by orchestral conductors of the period, particularly those trained in Austria and Germany. Nineteenth-century observers identified two principal approaches to conducting the classic works of Beethoven. The first, so-called objective or Classical approach, required that the contents of the score be performed as precisely as possible, with little to no interpretive involvement from the conductor or members of the orchestra. The other approach, often referred to as subjective, Romantic, or Wagnerian, emphasized the performer's freedom to insert their own personality into the music, thus bringing out what was understood as the latent expressive qualities of the score. The former aesthetic stressed supposed transparency in performance, while the latter implied that the composer's intentions could only be revealed by a musician who uncovered the deeper meanings hidden beneath the surface of the notes and transmitted them in a sensitive interpretation of the work. While contemporary critics and later scholars have outlined the nature of these competing approaches in theory, it is much less clear how this theory manifested in actual performance practice; that is, how a Classical or Romantic interpretation of the Viennese Classical repertoire would have sounded in a late nineteenth-century concert hall. I argue that a study of historical recordings in conjunction with the written sources from the period may help answer this question.

A project like this brings together a number of approaches and methodologies ranging from institutional history, aesthetics and ideology, to conducting and performance technique, to the developments in recording technology. These must be considered together to form a comprehensive picture of late nineteenth-century orchestral performance. Yet scholarship to date

tends to examine each of these issues in isolation. For instance, considerations of the aesthetic debate that underscores the competing approaches may be embedded within a broader discussion on the history of conducting, but do not address the specifics of orchestral performance practice. Meanwhile, scholarship that considers early recordings in the context of their contemporary performance practices tends to contrast these practices with modern interpretations, but does not address their historical and aesthetic roots. Here, I interpret and contextualize historical recordings of Beethoven's symphonies and demonstrate thereby how late nineteenth-century aesthetic ideals were manifested in their performance as far as the evidence permits.

State of Research

Discussions of competing interpretations of Beethoven's orchestral works appear throughout the scholarship with some regularity, but are rarely placed at the center of musicological discourse. Instead, references to the topic may be found in the contexts of historical surveys of conducting techniques, studies concerning the legacy of Beethoven and nineteenth-century music criticism, biographies of composers and conductors, and more recently, investigations into nineteenth-century performance practices, including the reorchestrations of Beethoven's scores. In addition, when such references appear, scholars tend to privilege theory over practice, and within the latter, the "Wagnerian" over the "Classical" approach. My study aims to redress that imbalance. The remainder of this section surveys the existing scholarship relevant to this project.

There are only a few major scholarly books devoted to the history of conducting. Of these, Elliot Galkin's *A History of Orchestral Conducting: In Theory and Practice* is the most comprehensive, including a reference to the aesthetic divide mentioned above, though only in the

context of the development and evolution of conducting.¹ Specifically, Galkin describes how conducting gradually transformed from a means of keeping time to a musical practice, analogous to performing on an instrument. In addition, he provides the necessary history of the craft to explain how and why stylistic and aesthetic differences emerged. Given the book's massive scope, Galkin does not link studies of performance practice to his discussion of aesthetics. While he notes the historical importance of figures such as Berlioz and Wagner, the influence of their ideas on conducting practice are not discussed in depth. José Antonio Bowen's edited volume *Cambridge Companion to Conducting* is also concerned with the aesthetics underlying the competing approaches to conducting, contextualizing them within a variety of national traditions.² Contributors such as Charles Barber and Sir Charles Mackerras focus on technical concerns related to conducting an orchestra, while issues of style and interpretation are discussed in a superficial manner.

The subject of performing Beethoven after his death has attracted a fair degree of scholarly attention, given the complexity of issues associated with the topic. George Barth, in his monograph *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style*, assesses the often contradictory statements Carl Czerny and Anton Schindler gave to describe Beethoven's own performance style.³ Although Barth does not address conducting specifically, his book shows that Beethoven's pupils and colleagues already disagreed over how to interpret the composer's works. Additionally, by parsing fact from fiction in Schindler's often unreliable accounts, Barth contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the performance aesthetics Beethoven valued. While Barth's work focuses on the performance practices that arose after

¹ Elliott W. Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting: In Theory and Practice* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1988).

² José Antonio Bowen, *The Cambridge Companion to Conducting* (Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³ George Barth, *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Beethoven's death, Lydia Goehr's work concerns the evolution of ideas about music within public consciousness during the same period. Goehr's monograph *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* has introduced the concept of *Werktreue* into musicological discourse.⁴ She argues that this ideal took hold among critics and the public during the early Romantic period, and that baton conducting emerged as a consequence of its implications. According to Goehr, the conductor became the person to properly transform the musical work into sound.

Bowen expanded on Goehr's scholarship in his dissertation, "The Conductor and the Score: The Relationship between Interpreter and Text in the Generation of Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner."⁵ Bowen's study offers one of the most extensive discussions to date on the aesthetic differences among nineteenth-century conductors. His focus, however, is primarily on the early practitioners of baton conducting, and he does not address their influences in the later Romantic period. Methodologically, Bowen bases his argument on the evidence found in contemporary criticism (specifically, London newspapers) and makes no attempt to engage with the sonic material from early twentieth-century recordings.

Alongside the concept of *Werktreue*, scholars have focused on the rise of musical virtuosity in the years after Beethoven's death. Paul Metzner, in his book *Crescendo of the Virtuoso*, relates musical virtuosity to the broader social context of early nineteenth-century European society.⁶ While he addresses virtuosity among multiple professions, not just music, one of his case studies focuses on Liszt's adoption of Paganini's virtuosic display into his own piano performances. Although Metzner's argument is limited to Liszt's career as a pianist-composer, David Friddle in his article "Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz Conducting" argues that Liszt's

⁴ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2007), 235-236.

⁵ José Antonio Bowen, "The Conductor and the Score: The Relationship between Interpreter and Text in the Generation of Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Wagner." (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1994).

⁶ Paul Metzner, *Crescendo of the Virtuoso: Spectacle, Skill, and Self-Promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

approach carried over into his conducting of the Viennese Classical repertoire. While mainly serving to contrast Liszt's conducting aesthetic with Berlioz's, Friddle also posits that his brand of virtuosity gave birth to a new, more subjective conducting style, often associated with Wagner and other members of the New German School.⁷

Scholars have written extensively on the careers of conductors influenced by Wagner's aesthetic theories, including Hans von Bülow, Hans Richter, Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, and Arturo Toscanini.⁸ These are primarily biographical accounts, with the authors focused more on the lives of these musicians than on the specifics of their performance styles. That said, biographies do provide important insight into performance practice: for example, Hans Richter's personal closeness to Wagner proved a major influence on that conductor's interpretive style, as shown in the above mentioned biography. Another noteworthy monograph, Raymond Holden's *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life*, is a rare example of a biography dedicated to Strauss's work as a conductor, rather than a composer. As part of his account, Holden compares Strauss's recordings of Beethoven and Mozart symphonies to his annotated scores of these works, and places them into the context of his broader theoretical ideas. Holden's comprehensive methodological approach of relating Strauss's recordings to nineteenth-century aesthetics has proved useful in my own work.

Holden's monograph also contains references to one of the most controversial performance practice issues in nineteenth-century conducting: reorchestrations of Classical scores for late-Romantic orchestras. Specifically, Holden describes how Strauss incorporated

⁷ David Friddle, "Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz: Conducting, Interpretation and Two Underappreciated Legacies," *American Choral Review* 58 (2019): 1–13.

⁸ Kenneth Birkin, *Hans von Bülow: A Life for Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Christopher Fifield, *Hans Richter*, New edition (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016). Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Raymond Holden, *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Harvey Sachs, *Toscanini: Musician of Conscience* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

Wagner's ideas on reorchestration into his own approach. In addition, in his article "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way," Holden compares and contrasts Strauss's reorchestrations with Mahler's, as well as addressing their critical receptions.⁹ Veronica Franke's research also concerns Mahler's role as a reorchestrator, although she concentrates solely on Schumann's symphonies, rather than the Viennese Classical repertoire.¹⁰ In addition, the picture of critical reception of Mahler's reorchestrations of Beethoven is not complete without Kristen M. Knittel's scathing account of the Viennese press's both overt and subtle antisemitism directed at Mahler, in her essay "'Polemik im Concertsaal': Mahler, Beethoven, and the Viennese Critics."¹¹ This scholarship provides a useful guide for reading contemporary accounts of performance practice critically, as ethnic and personal biases tend to influence individual critics' perceptions and tastes.

In addition to studies of individual conductors and specific performances, scholars of music criticism offer more broadly conceived accounts of concert life in late nineteenth-century Europe as seen through the lens of its critics. Particularly useful is Sandra McColl's monograph, *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896-1897*, which includes a chapter on critics' views regarding performances of Beethoven, Mozart, and Wagner.¹² McColl quotes extensively from the Viennese press accounts, including the reviews of performances by Hans Richter, Felix Weingartner, Gustav Mahler, Felix Mottl, and Artur Nikisch. Unfortunately, while beneficial to my research, this portion of her monograph is fairly brief, and embedded within a broader

⁹ Raymond Holden, "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way," *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 3–14.

¹⁰ Veronica Mary Franke, "Mahler's Reorchestration of Schumann's 'Spring' Symphony, Op. 38: Background, Analysis, Intentions," *Acta Musicologica* 78, no. 1 (2006): 75–109.

¹¹ K. Knittel, "'Polemik Im Concertsaal': Mahler, Beethoven, and the Viennese Critics," *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 3 (2006): 289–321.

¹² Sandra McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896-1897: Critically Moving Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

discussion of how music critics operated in late nineteenth-century Vienna, rather than concerned with evaluating the performances they witnessed.

The last group of studies I would like to mention are ones that incorporate historical recordings into their argument. To date, these sources have been used primarily to address the more technical aspects of instrumental and vocal performance practice. Although scholars typically include at least some discussion of conducting aesthetics, few studies focus on orchestral conducting. Richard Taruskin was among the first musicologists to consider early twentieth-century orchestral recordings as part of his argument, although his focus was primarily the critique of historical “authenticity” in period instrument ensembles, which is beyond the scope of my project.¹³ In addition, in his essay “Resisting the Ninth,” Taruskin makes a comparative analysis of the tempo modifications German-trained conductors employed in a range of post-WWII recordings of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, and points out the traces of the Wagnerian tradition in some of their approaches.¹⁴ However, as his goal is to contrast the recordings from the 1950 and 1960s with the later, historically informed approach (specifically, that of Roger Norrington), he does not consider the early twentieth-century recordings, which are my primary concern.

The first and to date the only study to explore early orchestral recordings more broadly was Robert Philip’s 1992 monograph, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950*.¹⁵ Philip’s work demonstrated the usefulness of historical recordings for gaining insight into Romantic-era performance practice, and his methodology proved extremely influential for further research devoted to soloists. Clive Brown, David

¹³ Richard Taruskin, “The Modern Sound of Early Music,” in *Text & Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 164–72.

¹⁴ Richard Taruskin, “Resisting the Ninth,” in *Text & Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 235–262.

¹⁵ Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Milsom, and Neal Peres Da Costa have all followed his approach of comparing the information gleaned from historical recordings to that contained in nineteenth-century performance treatises.¹⁶ Meanwhile, while Bowen’s analysis of tempo choices and flexibility in early orchestral recordings reads similarly to that of his colleagues, he does not connect his findings to Romantic-era performance practices.¹⁷ James Hepokoski in his 2023 article “‘Listen and Be Amazed!’: Odeon, Künneke, and the First Recordings of Complete Symphonies” does include an insightful historical narrative on early recording companies and their efforts to produce the first recordings of major symphonic works, including Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5.¹⁸ However, Hepokoski concerns himself mostly with how these standard works were first recorded, and only briefly discusses matters of performance practice. In addition, performance practice studies that incorporate historical recordings rarely consider the relevance of nineteenth-century aesthetic debates to their argument, concentrating instead on surveying general performance conventions of the period. One exception is Christopher Dymont’s *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies: From Brahms to Boult*, which includes a discussion of early recordings of Brahms’s symphonies.¹⁹ Dymont’s monograph shows how different aesthetic approaches to conducting may be manifested in recordings, although its exclusive focus on Brahms’s music limits its usefulness for my own project.

To summarize, scholarship on performing orchestral music in late nineteenth-century Europe is not voluminous, though it is growing. In addition, studies on this topic tend to be

¹⁶ Clive Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performing Practice 1750-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁷ José Antonio Bowen, “Tempo, Duration, and Flexibility: Techniques in the Analysis of Performance,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 16, no. 2 (1996): 111–56.

¹⁸ James Hepokoski, “‘Listen and Be Amazed!’: Odeon, Künneke, and the First Recordings of Complete Symphonies,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 76, no. 1 (2023): 113–67.

¹⁹ Christopher Dymont, *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies: From Brahms to Boult* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016).

narrow rather than comprehensive in their focus, addressing, for instance, either the theoretical debates or individual musicians' performances, but not both. My study aims to synthesize multiple elements that inform late nineteenth-century performance practice of Classical orchestral repertoire: the elements that to date have only been explored separately.

Primary Sources

Primary sources used for this thesis include a variety of conductors' own written testimonies and concert reviews from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century press, as well as sound recordings dating from 1913 to 1940. Principal nineteenth-century treatises on orchestral conducting and writings by conductors of the period have been published and are available in English translations. These include a conducting treatise by Berlioz and Wagner's essays on conducting, all of which contain important ideas on various stylistic approaches.²⁰ Felix Weingartner's conducting treatise provides vital information on the diverse conducting styles of the late-Romantic era, which he claimed stemmed in part from Berlioz and Wagner's influence.²¹ Outside of treatises, eyewitness accounts of late nineteenth-century conducting practices are also found in correspondence, diary entries, and other personal writings by musicians of the period. For example, the collected correspondence of Hans von Bülow, Gustav Mahler, Johannes Brahms and his circle, as well as Richard Strauss all document their perceptions of performance styles and contain their statements on interpretation of Classical orchestral works.²²

²⁰ Hector Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*, ed. Hugh Macdonald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Chris Walton and Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting: A New Translation with Critical Commentary* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2021).

²¹ Felix Weingartner, *Weingartner on Music & Conducting: Three Essays*, trans. Ernest Newman, Jessie Crosland, and Howard Schott (New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

²² Hans von Bülow, *Letters of Hans von Bülow to Richard Wagner, Cosima Wagner, His Daughter Daniela, Luise von Bülow, Karl Klindworth, Carl Bechstein*, ed. Richard Count du Moulin Eckart, trans. Hannah Walter (New York: Vienna House, 1972). Gustav Mahler, *The Mahler Family Letters*, ed. Stephen McClatchie (Oxford: Oxford

Another principal source of information about the stylistic practices of late nineteenth-century conductors is contemporary press accounts. Apart from the citations in the literature discussed above, some of the most prominent music critics of the day, such as Eduard Hanslick and George Bernard Shaw, have their collected writings available in published volumes.²³ Other criticism, including reviews of orchestral concerts and testimonials on public reception of individual conductors' interpretations, remains unpublished, but some of this material has been digitized by libraries and archives that house it, or has been made accessible via RIPM. Notably, many German-trained conductors that particularly interest me performed regularly in England and the United States, thus receiving much attention from English-speaking critics. This includes Mahler and Toscanini, who both conducted in New York in the early 1900s, as well as Richter, Nikisch, and Henschel, who all conducted frequently in London, with the latter two having held conducting positions in Boston. As evident from my review of secondary literature, scholars tend to privilege critical accounts of their concerts that appeared in the German-language press. I have instead concentrated on reports found in English-language newspapers, thus complementing these existing studies.

The majority of the early orchestral recordings of Beethoven are also freely available today. Most have been re-released on CD, and are also easily accessible online, either in the form of audio downloads, or on streaming platforms such as YouTube and Spotify.

University Press, 2006). Hans von Bülow, *Hans von Bülow's Letters to Johannes Brahms: A Research Edition*, ed. Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, trans. Cynthia Klohr (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012). Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss, *Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss: Correspondence, 1888-1911*, ed. Herta Blaukopf, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

²³ Eduard Hanslick, *Hanslick's Music Criticisms*, trans. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1988). George Bernard Shaw, *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism in Three Volumes*, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: The Bodley Head, 1989).

Methodology

My principal contribution to the existing literature on the subject is the analysis of a select number of early recordings of Beethoven's symphonic output, and the contextualizing of these analyses within both the critical reception of similar performances, and the conductors' own articulation of their aesthetic principles. With this approach, I answer two questions, in so far as that is possible with the materials available to us: 1) how the observers' descriptive language was translated into sound, or if their language could adequately characterize these performances, and 2) to what extent conductors' recorded performances matched their stated goals.

Among the extant recordings, I have prioritized those made by the oldest conductors available, in order to increase the likelihood that their recorded performances reflect genuine Romantic-era performance practices. That said, I offer a representative sample of the interpretive styles that existed in the late nineteenth century, with a good mix of Classical and Romantic approaches. The recordings I have selected were made by nine different conductors, whose birth years range from 1850 to 1871, and all of whom recorded at least one movement of a Beethoven symphony. This includes four recordings each of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, three recordings of the first movement of his Symphony No. 3, seven recordings of his Symphony No. 5, and four recordings of his Symphony No. 7, with an additional fifth recording of its last movement. I have limited my analyses to the odd-numbered symphonies primarily due to the historical recordings available. There are far more existing recordings of the odd-numbered symphonies made by nineteenth-century born conductors, since these tended to occupy a more privileged status in the Classical canon. I have also chosen to exclude the Ninth Symphony, partially for similar reasons,

and additionally due to its sheer length and the addition of singers, both of which introduce too many complicating factors into the analysis of its performances.

Among the interpretive choices I noted for each recording are tempo selection, use of tempo modification, ensemble precision, and clear instances of reorchestration. I determined tempo choices by using the open-source software Sonic Visualiser to track the BPM fluctuations throughout each recorded movement, providing the average BPM for each movement's major sections, as well as the BPM range for those same sections. This way, I was able to compare how each conductor interpreted the more crucial sections of the piece with respect to the average tempi taken, the extent the tempo fluctuates, and how gradually (or suddenly) it shifts.

Apart from their differing approaches to tempo, nineteenth-century conductors varied in the ensemble precision they required. Certain conductors preferred their instrumentalists to be as synchronized as possible, while others desired, or merely tolerated, more individual freedom from the musicians. Additionally, many early twentieth-century orchestral recordings reveal moments where sections of the ensemble are out of sync with one another, similar to the “rhythmic dislocation of melody from accompaniment” that nineteenth-century pianists frequently employed.²⁴

I then compare these analyses to the extant descriptions of live performances of the same repertoire by the same conductors, derived from both press reviews and private recollections found in sources such as correspondence and diary entries. By doing so, I aim to make sense of what these often vaguely worded accounts meant. Moreover, relating sonic materials to written statements of critics and performers illustrates, for instance, how consistent the tempo might have been in a Classical interpretation of Beethoven, and conversely, how “free” a Wagnerian

²⁴ This term refers to a pianist deliberately playing the right hand melody out-of-sync with the left hand accompaniment. See Philip, *Early Recordings*, 47, and Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record*, 41.

approach might have been. All of my findings have been documented with as much precision as possible, in order to facilitate the comparison between recordings.

Chapter Outline

This introduction has given an overview of the two competing aesthetic approaches to late nineteenth-century conducting of the Viennese Classical repertoire. I have surveyed the primary and secondary sources used for this project, and discussed its methodology. An outline for the remaining sections of the thesis follows.

Chapter 1 describes how orchestral conducting evolved and transformed into an interpretive art over the course of the nineteenth century. I also discuss how the aesthetic debates surrounding the performance of Beethoven's music originated, and contrast the conducting approaches during Beethoven's lifetime with the more modern conducting styles that emerged later in the century

Chapter 2 provides an overview on the state of conducting and interpretive approaches to Classical Viennese repertoire during the late nineteenth century. I introduce and discuss observers' accounts of the early virtuoso conductors who left no surviving orchestral recordings, as well as the aesthetic aims of the conductors who did make recordings for posterity.

Chapter 3 examines reviews of live performances by the conductors who made recordings. I analyze what the critics heard, which performance aspects they praised, and to which they objected. I decipher the meanings of the extant reports and to what extent they matched these conductors' aesthetic aims.

Chapter 4 contains a survey of the early symphonic recordings of Beethoven conducted by the musicians discussed in the previous chapter. I examine how the recordings are distinct from one another and discuss the conductors' interpretive choices. I then contextualize the

quantitative analysis by comparing the recordings to the written accounts in order to further interpret the latter, while making sense of the contradictions and discontinuities that inevitably arise between these two types of sources.

The conclusion summarizes my findings – those from written testimonials and those found on early recordings – on how objective and subjective aesthetics shaped orchestral conducting in the late-romantic period. I also suggest potential fruitful avenues for further research.

Chapter 1

In this chapter, I give an overview of the history of baton conducting and discuss the origins of the aesthetic debate over the performance of Viennese Classical works. By doing so, I aim to give the necessary background for how such a stylistic divergence emerged within Austro-Germanic conducting.

The Classical Canon and *Werktreue*

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, European critics began to conceive of music as an independent art form capable of expressing truths that no language was capable of conveying. The new ideology disseminated and now accepted by the public privileged instrumental works as the best, highest-quality music that carried profound meaning, as it stood the test of time – an ideology that Carl Dahlhaus famously dubbed “metaphysics of instrumental music.”²⁵ Within nineteenth-century German culture in particular, instrumental music was hailed for its “universal” ability to communicate the highest truths: “it was a language beyond language, capable of expressing the inexpressible and opening up profound depths that words cannot reach.”²⁶ Alongside the privileging of instrumental works, Romantic theorists similarly began to espouse the idea of the composer-genius, which held that a composer whose works best conformed to these ideas of universality was innately gifted, and thus deified by the concert-going public.

As the concert culture shifted to reflect this new ideology, newer and larger concert halls began to be constructed across mainland Europe – venues devoted to the performances of these immortal instrumental masterworks that further demonstrated their universal appeal by proving

²⁵ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 88-89.

²⁶ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 90.

to be more accessible to broader audiences, crossing the boundaries of socio-economic class. In these venues, instrumental works could be stripped of utilitarian function and presented without any extraneous distractions, which would channel the ideal of the sublime contained in the music itself.

While Western European art music often implies works written by deceased composers to modern readers, this connotation is relatively recent, and did not begin until the early nineteenth century. Until roughly the 1830s, the bulk of the performed repertoire consisted of contemporary music: the works, whose composers would have likely still been alive. After the death of Beethoven, Romantic ideology had made enough of an impact on audiences and critics for them to increasingly value past musical works. By the 1850s, a shift that had occurred in concert programming was becoming evident: pieces by dead composers gained preference over those by living musicians.

With the increasing emphasis on past musical works, a Classical canon inevitably formed. As Lydia Goehr relates,

One way to bring music of the past into the present, and then into the sphere of timelessness, was to strip it of its original, local, and extra-musical meanings. By severing all such connections, it was possible to think of it now as functionless. All one had to do next was impose upon the music meanings appropriate for the new aesthetic. Many musicians proceeded, therefore, to conceive of past music in the romantic terms of works. The canonization of dead composers and the formation of a musical repertoire of transcendent masterpieces was the result both sought and achieved.²⁷

Nineteenth-century critics, performers, and audiences inevitably projected their own artistic ideals and philosophies onto the music of the past. With respect to concert programming, this meant giving preferential treatment to the musical genres, styles, composers, and individual compositions thought to best exemplify the Romantic-era value system, such as the aesthetics of the sublime. Among these privileged repertoires were the late symphonies by Wolfgang

²⁷ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 246-247.

Amadeus Mozart, the late symphonies and oratorios by Joseph Haydn, and to a lesser extent, the oratorios and instrumental music by George Frederic Handel: as the century progressed, these were increasingly joined by the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. However, at the forefront of this approach to repertoire selection were the symphonic works by Beethoven. His nine symphonies, as well as his concert overtures, were considered the supreme achievements of instrumental music.

As Lydia Goehr argues, intertwined with the process of canon-formation was the new conceptualization of a musical work as a self-contained, intrinsically valuable ontological entity that exists independently of – and is infinitely more significant than – its performance. As a result, both performers and listeners, including critics, were increasingly urged to uphold the concept of *Werktreue* – of being “true to the work.” The practical applications of *Werktreue* depended on how the concept was understood by each individual musician, critic, or audience member. For some, *Werktreue* meant *Texttreue*, being “true to the text”: that is, an admonition to the performer to transfer a musical score into sound as precisely as possible, minimizing their own interpretive input that might distort the composer’s intention. For others, being true to the work meant being true not to the “letter,” but to the spirit of the work, by drawing out its expressive and communicative potential that represented the composer’s intention, yet could not be transmitted by notation alone – and thus required a hermeneutic “intervention” from its “reader.”

The *Werktreue* debate carried particularly important implications for performance practice when it came to the orchestral works by the revered Viennese masters, especially Beethoven, due to his central position within the newly formed “Classical” canon. The disagreements over the best approach to performing his music, evident already among the

composer's students and acolytes, went beyond technical execution and concerned specifically the issue of "faithfulness" – of *Werktreue*.

Among the most notable of such disagreements was between Carl Czerny and Anton Schindler, who not only expressed divergent views on how to perform specific works, but also contradicted one another on Beethoven's aesthetics when he performed his own works. Czerny, supported by Beethoven's students Ferdinand Ries and Ignaz Moscheles, advocated for maintaining a strict tempo when performing his music. Czerny, Ries, and Moscheles generally respected Beethoven's metronome markings, and thus favored relatively fast tempi for his piano works. Schindler, however, rejected this approach. His descriptions of Beethoven's performance style are the opposite to those of Czerny: he states, for instance, that Beethoven modified the tempo considerably when performing his own works. Likewise, Schindler casts much doubt on the accuracy of Beethoven's metronome markings, going so far as to claim that Beethoven himself had disavowed the metronome. As a result, Schindler claimed that in order to present Beethoven's music in a way that reflected the composer's own style, one must perform with flexible tempi suiting the affect of the piece. The divergent views of Beethoven's own aesthetics and artistic practices by Carl Czerny and Anton Schindler were not only broadly publicized but proved highly influential among both contemporary and later performers, including conductors of Beethoven's orchestral works.

Baton Conducting

Orchestral conducting, as it is understood today, is a relatively recent art form. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the principal violinist or the keyboard player was usually responsible for directing the musicians and keeping the ensemble together. All of Beethoven's symphonies,

with the exception of the Ninth, would have been conducted in this fashion during the composer's lifetime. The Ninth Symphony proved to be an exception because of the inclusion of a choir in the Finale, making this essentially a choral work for which various forms of baton conducting had already existed. However, given the increasing size and complexity of orchestral music as it evolved throughout Beethoven's lifetime, even the composer's purely instrumental works proved difficult to execute within the limits of the earlier practice. E. T. A. Hoffmann observed the difficulty of adequately leading a performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, noting

No instrument has difficult music to perform, but only an extremely reliable, well-trained orchestra animated by a single spirit can attempt this symphony; the least lapse in any detail would irredeemably spoil the whole work. The constant alternation, the interlocking of string and wind instruments, the single chords separated by rests, and suchlike, demand the utmost precision. It is therefore also advisable for the conductor not so much to play with the first violins more strongly than is desirable, which often happens, as to keep the orchestra constantly under his eye and hand. The way the first violin part is printed, showing the entries of the obbligato instruments, is useful for this purpose.²⁸

While Hoffmann did not have the foresight to predict the rise of baton conducting in symphonic music, it is clear from his comments that Beethoven's orchestral works presented new difficulties not found in the symphonies of Mozart and Haydn. The fact that Hoffmann essentially advises the principal violinist to play less and direct more already marks a transition towards baton conducting. As orchestral music became increasingly more complex and difficult to perform, conductors such as Louis Spohr, Gaspare Spontini, Carl Maria von Weber, and Felix Mendelssohn espoused the then new approach of directing with a baton.

The roots of baton conducting lie in the duties of an eighteenth-century Kapellmeister, which involved "producing, composing, copying, rehearsing and conducting or performing the

²⁸ E. T. A. (Ernst Theodor Amadeus). Hoffmann, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, trans. David Charlton (Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 1989), 251.

music.”²⁹ According to José Bowen, an increased division of labor resulted in these duties being assigned to separate people. Directing an ensemble of musicians prior to *Werktreue* was, however, a purely practical matter that had little to no artistic or philosophical aims behind it. Therefore, the term “conductor” at that time would have referred to whoever happened to be in charge of directing the musicians during a performance, usually a keyboardist or the principal violinist.

Along with practical considerations (i.e. the necessity of leading increasingly large ensembles through increasingly complex scores), it was the *Werktreue* ideal that necessitated a separate musician, one not performing with the orchestra, to be appointed and charged with both overseeing the technical aspects of the performance, and more importantly, guiding the interpretation of the music that would reflect the composer’s intentions. This emphasis on being true to the work’s “meaning” raised the status of the conductor as the person performing the most important musical function in the ensemble. As Bowen states, “the idea of music as work is intimately tied to the role of the performer. The two are necessarily linked. If the composer has done all of the creating, then the performer needs only to recreate that inspiration.”³⁰ If the function of conducting prior to *Werktreue* was solely to keep time, in the later nineteenth century it gradually evolved to encompass overseeing and controlling all musical aspects of an orchestral performance.

As a result of this increasingly prominent role of a conductor as interpreter, the *Werktreue* vs *Texttreue* debate directly affected the newly emerging conducting profession. Felix Mendelssohn and Hector Berlioz both advocated for a straightforward approach to conducting, such as generally fast tempi and highlighting the work’s structure over excessive sensibility.

²⁹ Bowen, “The Conductor and the Score,” 1.

³⁰ Bowen, 23.

Mendelssohn was arguably the first baton conductor to execute the *Texttreue* principles. As the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, he did more than keep time for the orchestra: he also paid careful attention to phrasing, dynamics, tempi, and balance. Even though Mendelssohn expressed a belief that a conductor's active involvement in performance should be minimal, it was he who was still in charge of the work's execution and musical realization.

Unlike Mendelssohn, who viewed the conductor as a transparent entity, Berlioz argued that the conductor should communicate musical inspiration onto the players, in addition to providing technical leadership. In his view, the conductor should do more than simply keep the musicians together, but lead and direct them to bring out expressive nuances inherent in the score. Devoting an entire chapter in his *Treatise on Instrumentation* to conducting, Berlioz wrote

The conductor must be able both to see and to 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 [...] 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 to them is missing, and consequently the power, control and direction will slip from him completely. He is not then a leader and a director, but simply a time-beater [...] The musicians must share his feelings, his perceptions and his emotions. His feelings and emotions will then pass to them, his inner flame will warm them, his electricity will charge them, his drive will propel them. He will radiate the vital spark of music.³¹

Emphasizing this need to communicate the work's emotive qualities, he further argues: "Not only must he interpret the composer's intentions in works which the players already know, he must also implant that knowledge when the work is new to them."³² Berlioz here clearly demonstrates his view of the conductor's role as subservient to the composer. His position is similarly revealed in advocating for a close study of the composer's metronome markings in order to establish a proper tempo.³³ Echoing Czerny's position, Berlioz's *Texttreue* approach saw

³¹ Hector Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise: A Translation and Commentary*, ed. Hugh Macdonald (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2002), 337-338.

³² Berlioz, *Berlioz's Orchestration Treatise*, 338.

³³ Berlioz, 339.

the conductor's role as translating the notes of the orchestral score into sound, without interposing their own personality; he argued for interpretive "transparency" and "letting the music speak for itself."

Like Mendelssohn and Berlioz, Wagner argued that one of the most important tasks of a conductor was to establish the correct tempo, although he hardly agreed with Mendelssohn's tempo choices. For Wagner, a correct understanding of tempo came from comprehending the *melos* of the work being performed. In the 1871 essay on conducting, he wrote:

*Only by properly recognizing the melos can one achieve the correct tempo: these two are indivisible; the one determines the other. I shall not shy away here from expressing my opinion on the majority of our performances of classical instrumental works, for I regard them as insufficient to an alarming degree. And I believe I can prove it by pointing out that our conductors are incapable of setting the correct tempo because they understand nothing of singing. I have never yet come across any German capellmeister or conductor who has truly been able to sing a melody. [...] We cannot see how he might be able to breathe life and soul into a musical performance.*³⁴

Wagner then believed that the melodic content and tempo were inherently related, and to bring out the *melos*, the conductor needed to modify the tempo within the movement. As a result, he argued, *pace* Berlioz, that metronome markings could not convey the subtle nuances of a work's tempo, and were therefore useless as an indicator of tempi.

Although any study on late nineteenth-century conducting must include a discussion of Wagner, one must also be careful not to overstate his influence, especially with respect to rubato.³⁵ Chris Walton makes this point in his commentary to Wagner's essays on conducting, stating that there was "nothing new in modifying the tempo in a work, nor should we suppose that Wagner was alone in his era with his tempo modifications. As in so many areas, Wagner is keen here to erect binary oppositions in order to emphasize the rightness of his own practice, and

³⁴ Richard Wagner and Chris Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting: A New Translation with Critical Commentary*, trans. Chris Walton (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2021), 38.

³⁵ The term rubato encompassed different kinds of expressive timing for nineteenth-century musicians, tempo modifications being one of these. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the terms rubato, tempo modifications, and tempo fluctuations interchangeably.

the wrongness of others.”³⁶ While Wagner may have conducted with more prominent rubato than the likes of Mendelssohn, he did not invent this practice in conducting. For instance, Weber argued as early as 1827 that the conductor should not be overly mechanical in the treatment of rhythm, and flexibility in tempo was needed to properly communicate the character of the piece.³⁷ Thus, far from a Wagnerian innovation, modifying the tempo within a movement was an old musical practice, one even a pedantic pedagogue like Carl Czerny described appropriate places within a piece to do so.

Where Wagner does have historical importance is the widespread adoption of tempo modifications in conducting Viennese Classical works, as a result of his widely disseminated views. Likewise, Wagner’s interpretations of Beethoven’s symphonies were seen as novel – for good or ill – by mid-nineteenth-century critics, as writings by Henry Smart and Eduard Hanslick reveal. For instance, in his review of Wagner’s performance of the *Eroica Symphony*, Hanslick observed

The novel element in Wagner’s reading consists, to put it briefly, in frequent ‘modifications of tempo’ within a single movement [...] Wagner’s tempo changes in [the finale of *Eroica*] achieved a charming effect. Elsewhere he seemed to carry his ‘modifications’ too far. After a very fast beginning of the first movement, for example, he takes the second theme (forty-fifth measure) conspicuously slower, thus disturbing the listener’s hardly confirmed establishment in the fundamental mood of the movement and diverting the ‘heroic’ character of the symphony towards the sentiment. He takes the Scherzo uncommonly fast, almost presto – a hazardous undertaking even with a virtuoso orchestra. The Funeral March was beautiful, particularly the gradual dying away of the main theme.³⁸

Hanslick concluded his review by assessing the performance as a whole as “extremely interesting, full of stimulating devices and effects; at the same time, hardly anyone will doubt that the origin of the ‘modifications’ is traceable rather to Wagner than to Beethoven.”³⁹

³⁶ Walton, *Richard Wagner’s Essays on Conducting*, 239.

³⁷ Bowen, “The Conductor and the Score,” 21-22.

³⁸ Eduard Hanslick, *Hanslick’s Music Criticisms*, trans. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 105-106.

³⁹ Hanslick, *Hanslick’s Music Criticisms*, 106.

Although Hanslick's many aesthetic disagreements with Wagner must have colored his judgement here, Wagner's use of rubato was clearly both new enough and a prominent enough feature of his interpretation to warrant critical commentary.

At the same time, the stricter conducting styles that Wagner criticized should also be viewed with the understanding that while perhaps less volatile than his, this performance practice would hardly reflect today's exacting performance standards. A prominent pianist, composer, and conductor Carl Reinecke was "pilloried in [Wagner's] *Über das Dirigieren* for his supposedly rigid approach to tempo," according to Walton. Yet the scholar further argues that while there is no extant evidence of Reinecke's conducting, "his piano rolls prove that when he played, he engaged in all manner of *crescendi*, *decrescendi*, *arpeggiandi* and subtle tempo shifts quite unlike the stricter style of [...] playing that became the norm in the 20th century."⁴⁰ It is therefore important to interpret the descriptions and evaluations of conducting practices found in nineteenth-century criticism according to the tastes and practices of its time, keeping in mind that the critics' observations of tempo strictness or any aspect of the performance may have meant something different to their Romantic-era readers than they would mean to us today.

Reorchestration

One of the issues that would routinely come up when performing older works for newer audiences was the use of updated instrumentation. Unlike modernist attitudes that see any change to the score as a deviation from the composer's intentions, nineteenth-century musicians held much more practical views. To them, updating the size and sound of the ensemble for the new times did not violate the *Werktreue* principles, but rather upheld them. For instance, when Mendelssohn revived Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, he had no qualms with performing the work

⁴⁰ Walton, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting*, 240.

with a chorus of 400 singers,⁴¹ even though it would have most likely been performed with one voice per part in Bach's lifetime.⁴² Rescoring Bach did not interfere with Mendelssohn's *Texttreue* convictions, as the number of musicians performing a piece was not seen as integral to the work, or reflecting the composer's intentions. As noted above, mid-nineteenth-century orchestras were typically much larger than they had been in Mozart and Beethoven's lifetimes, particularly in the string sections. To account for this, woodwinds were typically doubled in loud passages, simply for the sake of preserving ensemble balance.⁴³ Such alterations were usually considered necessary in order to communicate the work's truth.

However, Wagner took reorchestration a step further. For instance, he was known for rescoring individual passages in Beethoven's orchestral works to clarify the melodic material, typically by doubling the melodies originally scored for woodwinds with brass instruments.⁴⁴ For Wagner, this more extensive reorchestration was meant to transmit the spirit of a work, originally written for a more primitive ensemble, to a more modern orchestra. As a further justification for this practice, Wagner argued that due to his deafness, Beethoven was not able to hear his own works performed. Thus, an intervention by a musician of a like caliber, specifically Wagner himself, was necessary to make the "corrections" Beethoven would have himself wished to make, had he had the physical ability to do so.⁴⁵ Most notable conductors of the late nineteenth century adopted at least some of Wagner's recommended touch ups for Beethoven's symphonies. Ironically, late eighteenth-century orchestral works, such as Mozart and Haydn's symphonies, were not usually subject to the same kind of radical reorchestration, despite having been scored for an even smaller ensemble than those by Beethoven.

⁴¹ Bowen, "The Conductor and the Score," 43.

⁴² Rifkin, Joshua. "Bach's Chorus: A Preliminary Report." *The Musical Times* 123, no. 1677 (1982): 747-54.

⁴³ Raymond Holden, "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way," *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 3.

⁴⁴ Holden, "The Iconic Symphony," 3-4.

⁴⁵ Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Essays on Conducting*, 112-113

Virtuoso conductor

Alongside the *Werktreue* ideal with its implications for tempo and scoring, the seemingly opposing phenomenon of musical virtuosity flourished across Europe and beyond. Touring virtuoso musicians – pianists mostly, but also violinists, and of course singers – dazzled audiences by displaying their technical command of their craft. A common perception – and common criticism – of these virtuosos was their willingness to sacrifice artistry in favor of such technical display. This complaint encompassed both performance and composition, as virtuoso instrumentalists in particular routinely composed new technically demanding works specifically to showcase their abilities. This was especially true of Franz Liszt, arguably the most influential of nineteenth-century piano virtuosos, and a frequent target for such criticism.

The case of Franz Liszt is particularly consequential for this argument because later in his career, the great pianist and composer also became a notable conductor. He led performances not only of his works and those of his contemporaries, but of the Viennese Classical repertoire as well, incorporating elements of showmanship acquired during his touring virtuoso years into his conducting and embracing tempo flexibility as necessary to communicating the true expression of a work.

While Liszt was unique in many ways, his transition from a virtuoso pianist to a virtuoso conductor is indicative of a broader and more profound shift in how the practice of conducting was perceived. Specifically, conducting was increasingly conceived as a musical practice that demanded technical virtuosity in the same way that playing the piano or a violin at a high level did. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century, conducting an orchestra was so frequently compared to performing on an instrument, it was becoming a journalistic cliché. The Boston music critic

Louis C. Elson, for instance, described Artur Nikisch as “what may be termed an orchestral virtuoso; he plays upon the orchestra as a Paderewski might manipulate a keyboard.”⁴⁶

Without using the precise term, Elson describes Nikisch as a “virtuoso conductor,” a new type of virtuoso that was becoming increasingly common on concert stages in both Europe and America. Such a conductor was seen, in many respects, as the primary focus of the orchestral performance, demonstrating an in-depth knowledge and engagement with the piece. Beyond keeping the musicians together and maintaining the tempo, he was expected to communicate every nuance and expressive aspect of the performance. An American critic writing for *The Musical World* gives a revealing description of this phenomenon in 1903, stating: “In Europe the virtuoso-conductor, as he is sometimes termed, is an established institution. Men of inborn talent for conducting, whose control over their orchestras is as magnetic as it is discriminating, are eagerly welcomed because of their authoritative and inspired interpretations.” The reviewer goes on to list several prominent names as examples of a virtuoso conductor, including Edouard Colonne, Henry Wood, Felix Weingartner, Vasilii Safonov, and Richard Strauss.

Another common trend in critical discussions of virtuoso conductors linked their performance practice with the aesthetics of Wagner. It is important to stress, however, that not all virtuoso conductors followed Wagner’s conducting principles, such as his advocacy of tempo modifications. Just as many emphasized the need to maintain a strict and unyielding tempo. Even some prominent Wagnerian conductors, including Hans Richter, Karl Muck, Felix Weingartner, and Arturo Toscanini, insisted on a “transparent” approach to performing Beethoven and Mozart’s classics. At the same time, Johannes Brahms, typically associated with the more conservative aesthetic circles, preferred the wayward conducting of Nikisch over Richter’s

⁴⁶ Louis C. Elson, “Some Important Features in American Music Life, The Boston Symphony Orchestra,” *The Musician*, December 1897, 317.

sometimes rigid approach. Clearly, the interpretive practices of late nineteenth-century conductors were as diverse, and at times contradictory, as the ideological and aesthetic landscape that informed them. As such, the concept of a virtuoso conductor involved not so much a particular style of interpretation (such as the use of rubato), but rather the mastery of the conducting craft and the musical inspiration that the conductor exuded and transmitted to the orchestra.

That said, the tempo rubato advocated by Wagner became something of a fad among conductors of the late nineteenth century, and not just in German-speaking lands. Giuseppe Verdi, who himself was an immensely skilled conductor, commented on this trend, noting that “it’s also rampant in Italy too; it’s almost funny to see how many a young capellmeister of ours changes the tempo every ten measures in every insignificant aria and in every orchestral piece, trying to bring wholly new nuances to it.”⁴⁷

Conversely, Felix Weingartner in his memoirs provides a brief description of the kind of conductor who was decidedly not a virtuoso, but rather exemplified the type of Kapellmeister to whom Wagner had so strenuously objected in his conducting essays. Weingartner writes:

Herr Kriebel belonged to a type of conductor that has now practically died out, the kind that beats exact time. Not a crotchet was out of place and each one was exactly like the next. On the other hand there was no nervous subtlety about him, and that was in some ways an advantage.⁴⁸

Although Weingartner’s intimation that Kriebel’s performances featured exactly zero fluctuations in tempo is likely poetic license, it is clear that Kriebel did not deliberately add any expressive devices not indicated in the score and saw his job simply to maintain the tempo. A virtuoso conductor, by contrast, was expected to offer a personal interpretation of the music. That is why he was seen as the chief attraction of an orchestral performance. As they often do

⁴⁷ Walton, *Richard Wagner’s Essays on Conducting*, 260.

⁴⁸ Felix Weingartner, *Buffets and Rewards; a Musician’s Reminiscences*, trans. Marguerite Wolff (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1937), 112-113.

today, critics and audiences paid attention less to the already familiar Classical works and more to how a specific conductor rendered them in performance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined how conducting evolved from a practical means of keeping time into a recognizable art form that came to existence in the later nineteenth century. This art form arose partly as a consequence of the *Werktreue* ideal and its implications for musical performance. Other factors, such as the expanded size of orchestras, the increasing complexity of symphonic music, and the impact of virtuoso culture, also contributed to the formation of interpretive, baton conducting, resulting in the appearance by the end of the nineteenth century of a new type of performing musician: a virtuoso conductor. In the next chapter, I will consider some of the more influential virtuoso conductors of the late nineteenth century, as they positioned themselves aesthetically in relation to the continuous debates over how to best approach and most faithfully interpret the masterworks of the Viennese Classical repertoire.

Chapter 2

As the last chapter surveyed the transformation of conducting and broader developments in performance aesthetics throughout the nineteenth century, I now focus more specifically on the later part of the century. In the present chapter, I give an overview of the late nineteenth-century concert culture, address the rise of sound recording technology, and introduce the leading virtuoso conductors of the period. These I divide into two groups: the conductors whose work survives on sound recordings, and those who left no surviving recordings. While the former group will receive more attention later in the thesis, for the purposes of this chapter, theirs is a common concern: how to approach the often daunting task of conducting older works.

Concert Life in the Late Nineteenth Century

By the 1890s, symphonic concerts were a main fixture of musical life, both in Western Europe and in the United States. Most major European cities now supported professional orchestras, each with its own management and organizational structure. Earlier in the century, symphonic concerts typically featured musicians permanently assigned to various opera houses and other theater companies. Such musicians participated in these concerts as a special occasion, without holding a permanent membership in the ensemble. As purely instrumental works gained supremacy in the eyes of musicians, critics, and audiences, professional orchestras became increasingly common, as a permanent ensemble would perform such works with higher technical standards. For instance, the Vienna Philharmonic and the New York Philharmonic were both established in the 1840s, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra forming in 1881. In London, however, professional orchestras did not become established organizations until much later. The Queen's Hall Orchestra, arguably the first such ensemble in the city, was formed only in 1895. The London Symphony Orchestra was established as late as 1904, mainly by the players

protesting Sir Henry Wood ending the deputy system of the Queen's Hall, which allowed musicians who had not attended any previous rehearsals to fill in for permanent members before a concert. As the dispute indicates, the technical standards of London orchestras were generally inferior to those in continental Europe and the US – a distinction borne out by early sound recordings.

While regional differences evidently affected both the constitution of local orchestras and the relative quality of their performances, they also played a role in shaping professional music criticism that responded to orchestral concerts and the approaches to conducting they revealed. Although this thesis focuses primarily on the English-language press, a brief mention should first be made of Viennese critics' attitudes to different styles of conducting "classicism," as this is where the repertoire in question originates.

Viennese concert goers specifically were exposed to a variety of conducting styles from some of the most skilled musicians of their day, the city having been one of the main centers of European musical life. These included Hans Richter, Felix Weingartner, Artur Nikisch, and Gustav Mahler, among others. Their performances are well documented, and provide a lively picture of the diverse performance styles exhibited by the conductors. For example, Weingartner is described as embodying a Classical, restrained approach to Beethoven's music, while critics believed Nikisch brought out the deeper meanings from within the music.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Viennese critics' overall perception of the conductors' approaches appears to be more nuanced and less susceptible to framing them within a "Classic vs Romantic" binary, compared to British and American critics. Richter, Weingartner, Nikisch, Strauss, and Mahler all enjoyed an equally warm critical and audience reception, irrespective of the diversity of their styles. For example,

⁴⁹ Sandra McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896-1897: Critically Moving Forms*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 51-52.

Heinrich Schenker, while writing as a critic, claimed Nikisch's performances of Beethoven contained the most fidelity to the composer, yet at the same time praised Weingartner's very different approach to conducting as "Beethovenian."

By contrast, English-language critics overwhelmingly preferred the restrained approach to performing Beethoven's symphonies: use of rubato, for instance, would almost inevitably invite critical disapproval. In addition, British and American critics were viewing the ongoing changes in Austro-Germanic conducting practices from more of an outsider perspective. As such, these critics likely perceived the differences between the Classical and Romantic styles more readily than their German-speaking counterparts. Only New York critics prove to be somewhat of an exception: their attitudes more closely resemble those of the Viennese, perhaps owing to New York's cosmopolitan nature. Furthermore, it is important to note that American musical life in the late nineteenth century had not yet developed to the level of sophistication that matched its European counterparts. Although American orchestras developed in parallel with European ones, there is often a distinctly self-conscious, self-deprecating undertone in the Boston press accounts, in particular when describing the state of orchestral concerts in the city. However, American concert culture grew exponentially in the following decades, and by the early twentieth century, US orchestras rivaled European ones in terms of technical and musical standards, the fact also reflected in their critical reception.

Sound Recordings

While live performances by virtuoso conductors attracted increasing attention from audiences and critics in the late nineteenth century, the rapidly developing recording technology would soon begin to have an impact on both these conductors' careers and their reception. As the technology improved, notable musicians were often persuaded by colleagues to have their

playing recorded for posterity. By the early twentieth century, recordings would become a viable, marketable product, a tangible commodity freely available to middle and upper-class consumers, served also by multiple publications devoted to the discussion of recordings of standard repertoire.

The advent of recording technology marked an ontological shift in the nature of music. Prior to recordings, if someone wanted to hear a symphony by Mozart, for example, they had to either attend a live performance, or play a piano transcription in their home. Every performance of a piece was a unique event, with no two performances of the same work sounding identical. The possibility – and increasingly, the popularity – of music’s mechanical reproduction changed all that, leading to considerable qualms among professional musicians. For various reasons, a number of experienced performers openly refused or quietly avoided making recordings. Some feared that their mistakes would be immortalized. Others, such as Nellie Melba and Artur Schnabel, were displeased with the low fidelity of acoustical recordings. Prior to 1925, making acoustical recordings involved musicians performing into a large recording horn, in often cramped studio conditions. Bad enough for a soloist, the situation was especially problematic when trying to record a large ensemble. Orchestras, for instance, had to be reduced in size, and Stroh violins were sometimes used because they could better project into the horn. Out of all the recordings featured in Chapter 4, only two are acoustical: one of Beethoven’s *Fifth* with Artur Schnabel, and one of the finale of the *Seventh* by Karl Muck.

By 1925, electrical recordings began to be distributed. Made using microphones, these represented a breakthrough in sound fidelity. Still, other technical problems remained unsolved. The most important of these was the limited amount of recording time that would fit onto each side of a 78 rpm record, which averaged somewhere between four and five minutes. This meant

that cuts were often made in longer works. Strauss's recording of Beethoven's *Seventh*, for example, features some significant cuts in the finale, in order to reduce the number of discs needed for the work, thus making it more marketable. That said, a once common misconception that performers would deliberately take faster tempi to fit a work onto fewer sides of a recording has been decisively debunked by scholars such as Robert Philip and Mark Katz. There is no evidence to suggest that tempi in early studio recordings exceeded those in live performances. To the contrary, the tempi on extant live recordings made by Willem Mengelberg, for example, are almost identical to those on his studio recordings, while Bronisław Huberman's live recording of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in 1946 features even faster tempi than his studio version made in 1928. Publications such as *Gramophone* or *The Phonograph Monthly* make no mention of this issue at all: their critics were unfazed by the tempi of recorded performances they reviewed, even those that may seem fast to modern listeners. In addition, as Katz notes, when LP records began to be released in 1948, there were no significant differences in the tempi now taken by the artists who had recorded using the earlier technology.⁵⁰

Notable Conductors Who Made No Recordings

In this section, I will briefly discuss the performance aesthetics and interpretive practices of three prominent virtuoso conductors, who have made an impact on their contemporary concert scene and left a significant posthumous legacy, yet made no orchestral recordings. Their approaches to conducting will instead be assessed using period documents, such as press accounts, correspondence, and personal recollections left by students and colleagues, as well as extrapolated from extant sound recordings made by later conductors influenced by them. Listed

⁵⁰ Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, Rev. ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 38-39.

in a chronological order by birth date, the conductors discussed below are Hans von Bülow, Hans Richter, and Gustav Mahler.

Hans von Bülow

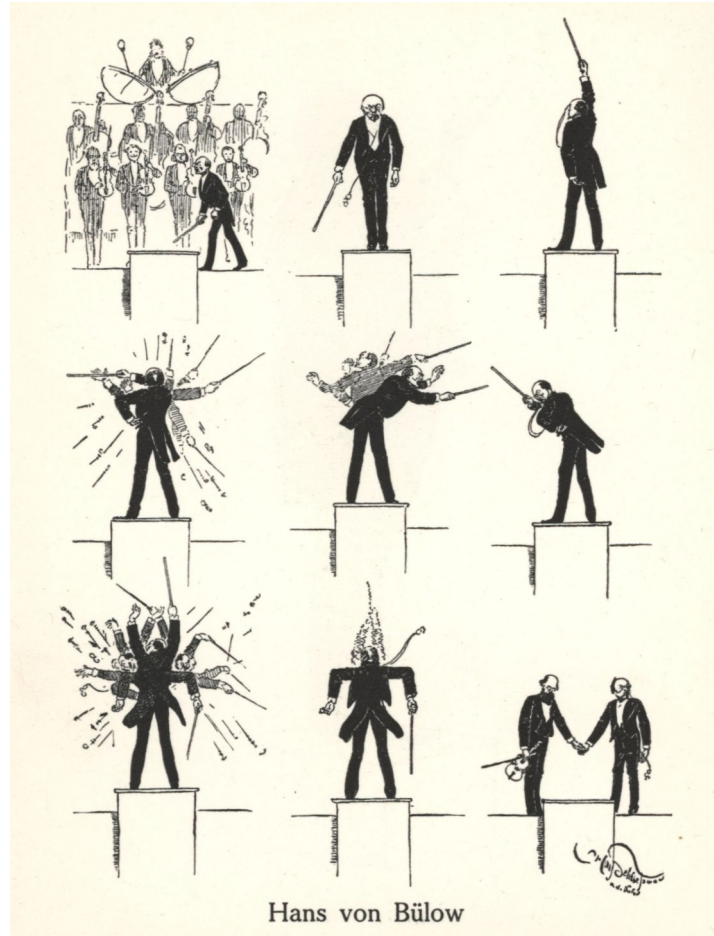


Figure 1: Silhouette of Hans von Bülow

Besides being one of the most accomplished piano virtuosos in the later half of the nineteenth century, Hans von Bülow (1830-1894) was also a virtuoso conductor, both of the Meiningen Court Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic, and a champion of both Wagner and Brahms. While praised by German-speaking critics for achieving heretofore unparalleled technical standards in orchestral performance, his conducting combined polish and transparency

with the kind of tempo modifications advocated by Wagner. The Viennese critic Robert Hirschfeld compared the technical polish of Bülow's performance with the Berlin Philharmonic to playing a mechanical instrument.⁵¹ Similarly, Eduard Hanslick observed:

Bülow conducts the [Meiningen Court] orchestra as if it were a little bell in his hand. The most admirable discipline has transformed it into an instrument upon which he plays with utter freedom. [...] Since he can achieve these nuances securely, it is understandable that he applies them at those places where they would seem appropriate to him if he were playing the same piece on the piano.

Hanslick also notes Bülow's frequent tempo modifications in his review. While the very fact of him pointing them out to his reader suggests that he considered them somewhat atypical, he does not offer an objection, arguing instead that "it would be unjust to call these tempo changes 'liberties,' since conscientious adherence to the score is a primary and inviolable rule with Bülow."⁵² While extensive rubato and "adherence to the score" might appear to be contradictory traits of a performance to a modern reader, Bülow's tempo modifications, however extensive, were evidently a device he employed to make structural elements of the score more apparent to his audiences. Hanslick seems to have appreciated this approach. Weingartner, on the other hand, was scathing in his criticism of Bülow's such "exaggerated" tempo modifications. He claimed:

In the first place, it cannot be denied that even while he was leader of the Meiningen orchestra there was often to be detected a *pedagogic element* in Bülow's renderings. It was clearly seen that he wished to deal a blow on the one side at philistine, metronomic timebeating, on the other side at a certain elegant off-handedness. Where a modification of the tempo was necessary to get expressive phrasing, it happened that in order to make this modification quite clear to his hearers he *exaggerated* it; indeed, he fell into a quite new tempo that was a negation of the main one.⁵³

The fact that Weingartner and Bülow had a somewhat strained relationship may have influenced the former to criticize his mentor's conducting more severely than he might have otherwise.

⁵¹ McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna*, 49.

⁵² Eduard Hanslick, *Hanslick's Music Criticisms*, trans. Henry Pleasants (New York: Dover Publications, 1988), 273.

⁵³ Felix Weingartner, "On Conducting," in *Weingartner on Music & Conducting: Three Essays*, trans. Ernest Newman, Jessie Crosland, and Howard Schott (New York: Dover Publications, 1969), 17-18.

Nevertheless, Weingartner's account cannot simply be dismissed as biased. To the contrary, in much of his writing the younger conductor notes the positive influence of Bülow's approach on his own. In addition, Weingartner's objections were seconded by other musicians. For example, Richard Strauss, despite admiring many qualities of Bülow's conducting, such as "the exactitude of phrasing, his intellectual penetration of the score combined with almost pedantic observation of the latter," still had reservations about his frequent tempo fluctuations. Unlike Weingartner, Strauss expressed himself a bit more diplomatically: when discussing Bülow's influence on his own conducting, he commented that in his own performances, he had "at times modified [Bülow's] incisive dissection of some movements – e.g. of the first movement of the *Eroica*" and claimed to have achieved "a greater uniformity of tempo."⁵⁴

These accounts give a fairly good idea of the general approach Bülow took to conducting the Viennese classics. He seems to have favored clear textures, and absolute precision of execution. While often accused of exaggerated tempo fluctuations, he seems to have used them as a means of highlighting structurally important moments in the piece, treating tempo changes as if they were marked in the score. Still, we can generally classify Bülow as a Romantic-style conductor.

To get an idea of how Bülow-led performances may have sounded, we can look to the recordings of Richard Strauss and Max Fiedler, both of whom modeled their own conducting on Bülow's. Indeed, one might argue that these two conductors channeled different aspects of Bülow's interpretive approach. Strauss may not have used as many tempo modifications, but his emphasis on transparency and structure certainly came from Bülow. Conversely, Fiedler's tempo fluctuations may have represented Bülow at his most indulgent, perhaps more indulgent than

⁵⁴ Richard Strauss, *Recollections and Reflections*, ed. Willi Schuh, trans. L. J. Lawrence (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1953), 50.

Bülow ever was.⁵⁵ If we were to envision the extent of tempo fluctuation in a performance on a continuum, Strauss would occupy the more restrained end, Fiedler the more expressive, while Bülow himself would be situated somewhere in the middle.

Hans Richter



Figure 2: Caricature of Hans Richter

⁵⁵ Christopher Dymont, *Conducting the Brahms Symphonies: From Brahms to Boult* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 21.

Hans Richter (1843-1916) was the first conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic to embody the qualities of a virtuoso conductor. Besides Vienna, he conducted frequently in London later in his life, becoming a common fixture in that city's musical life. Richter's repertoire was quite diverse and included a range of the Viennese classics, works by Tchaikovsky, Elgar, and other late Romantics. Yet he was particularly closely associated with Wagner, who entrusted Richter to lead the 1876 premiere of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and whose music he would frequently conduct throughout his career, both in the opera house and on the concert stage.⁵⁶ Yet contemporary descriptions of Richter's conducting style do not at all match the approach advocated and practiced by Liszt and Wagner. Quite the opposite, Richter's interpretations emphasized the score's structural solidity, and he apparently engaged in little to no tempo modifications, an attitude that bears a much closer resemblance to that of Mendelssohn and Berlioz. On the other hand, Richter's conducting was evidently perceived as fresh and invigorating when he took over the Vienna Philharmonic. As Christopher Fifield argues in his biography of the conductor, Richter's predecessors in that role lacked personal conviction, and were at odds with the virtuosity of Paganini and Liszt.⁵⁷ As a result, his own debut with the Philharmonic was an immediate sensation, generating much excitement with the public. This positive reception continued through his entire tenure in Vienna, where his performances were universally hailed by critics and embraced by audiences.⁵⁸

Richter's career illustrates the complexity of what it meant, in terms of practical results, for a conductor to have descended from Wagner's aesthetic influence. The idea of "Wagnerian conducting" itself is much more complicated, and more stylistically diverse, than many scholars

⁵⁶ Olga Haldey, *Mamontov's Private Opera: The Search for Modernism in Russian Theater* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 252

⁵⁷ Christopher Fifield, *Hans Richter* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 95.

⁵⁸ McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna*, 48.

have previously claimed. In this respect, Richter is an important case study. As an important early virtuoso conductor, Richter maintained complete interpretive control over the works he conducted, and executed them accordingly. It is that characteristic of Wagner's approach to conducting that Richter embodied.

Although Richter unfortunately made no recordings, we can glean some idea of his interpretations from contemporary criticism and extant recollections of his musicians. For instance, *Daily Telegraph* critic Benno Hollander says the following about Richter's performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7: "Weingartner is more like Richter than the others, but Richter had more warmth."⁵⁹ In a similar vein, Christopher Dymont recalls: "The great bassoon player Archie Camden, who between 1906 and 1910 played many times in the Hallé Orchestra under Richter, remarked to me that Richter was like the latterday Klemperer, 'but much greater!'"⁶⁰ Such comparisons are particularly useful, as both Weingartner and Klemperer left recordings of Beethoven's symphonies, giving a frame of reference for how Richter's performances may have sounded.⁶¹ Ironically, Richter himself, in a letter to his son-in-law, went out of his way to praise as exemplary not Weingartner's nor Klemperer's conducting, but rather that of Willem Mengelberg.⁶² His choice is particularly surprising, given that Mengelberg, by all accounts, modified tempi significantly in his performances (see below).

The British conductor Sir Adrian Boult, who frequently observed Richter's performances in the early twentieth century, gave the following detailed description of his conducting:

There was a sweep and flow in everything Hans Richter did, whether it was in Tchaikovsky or Wagner. He had a tremendous grip of architecture; each piece stood up in

⁵⁹ Quoted in: Fifield, *Hans Richter*, 459.

⁶⁰ Dymont, *Conducting Brahms*, 11.

⁶¹ In addition, the conductor Julius Prüwer (1874-1943), who had studied under Richter, made several recordings of Viennese classical works, which bear a striking resemblance to written descriptions of Richter's conducting. Unfortunately, none of these recordings are of Beethoven's symphonies, which place them beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁶² Fifield, *Hans Richter*, 441.

front of you most firmly and you felt that it was a rock. Everything had a steady rhythm and pulse. He would not make any *rubatos* to speak of except the obvious one in Beethoven's C minor. Compared with Nikisch it was quite ridiculous; it was just absolutely steady. He could do Tchaikovsky No. 6 straight through, but somehow or other it was most telling and dramatic. It might have been due to accentuation, but I'm inclined to think most of it came out of Richter's eye and went straight to the player concerned. Richter's stick always held everything together.

When asked in an interview whether Richter's conducting would have seemed strange to modern audiences, Boult opined, "I should think that, were he to come alive today [1972], Richter's interpretations would not appear eccentric to us; they might be voted occasionally dull but not often." As far as the approach to Beethoven is concerned, Boult claimed that "his [Richter's] Beethoven was solid German, absolutely consistent and only just dramatic enough to be exciting. His performances had a natural balance and clarity; there was always momentum and impetus behind them. Richter was a general piece of English furniture."⁶³ Boult's account paints Richter's approach to conducting as "Classical" rather than Romantic. However, it appears that at the same time, his performances possessed a musical commitment and dynamic intensity lacking in his predecessors.

Like Bülow, Richter seems to have prioritized communicating the work's formal structure, yet Richter did so while relentlessly maintaining a strict tempo. The composer Charles Villiers Stanford, writing in 1922, claimed that "von Bülow and Richter may be said to be the archetypes from whom modern conducting has descended [...] Richter was all for straightforwardness. He hated extravagance and even took the *diablerie* out of Berlioz."⁶⁴ Although Richter and Bülow were hardly personal adversaries, their distinct performance aesthetics bears traces of the often bitter *Werktreue* debates among the "descendants" of Czerny vs Schindler. Their divergent styles (which their English-speaking critics at least would have

⁶³ Fifield, 457.

⁶⁴ Quoted in: Fifield, 462.

defined as Romantic vs Classical) also form a foundation for the stylistic camps to be inhabited by the later virtuoso conductors.

Gustav Mahler

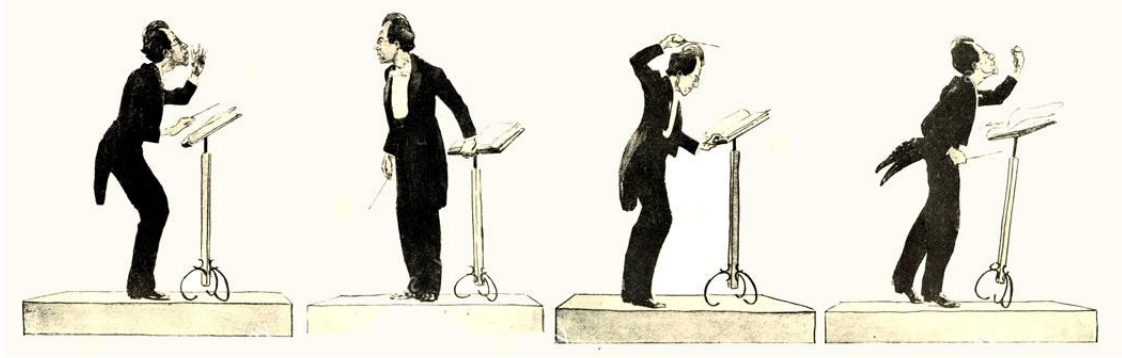


Figure 3: Caricature of Gustav Mahler

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) is known today primarily as a composer, yet his acclaim during his lifetime was linked primarily to his occupation as a conductor. Primarily an opera conductor, Mahler was notorious for his uncompromising technical and musical standards. To achieve this, he insisted upon exercising total control over every artistic element of an opera production, including the singers' interpretations of their roles. The results were admirable, and widely recognized by Mahler's prominent contemporaries, including none other than Hans von Bülow. In a letter to Richard Strauss, Bülow reports: "I made a new, very delightful acquaintance in Herr Mahler, who seemed to me a highly intelligent musician and conductor; one of the few modern conductors who knows about tempo modification, and in general had excellent views, particularly on Wagner's tempi (contrary to those of the now accredited Wagner conductors)."⁶⁵

This comment indicates, first, that Mahler practiced Wagner's conducting aesthetics, and it

⁶⁵ Richard Strauss, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Willi Schuh and Franz Trenner, in *Richard Strauss Jahrbuch 1954* (Bonn: Boosey & Hawkes, 1953), 54.

further indicates that his technical standards must have been impressive, as Bülow himself had achieved great fame for his interpretations of Wagner's works. Here is how Mahler's protégé

Bruno Walter describes his mentor's conducting style:

He rendered strict obedience to the musical score, to the value of its notes, and to its directions concerning time, delivery, and dynamics, and demanded it of all his co-workers. He asked for an instrumental correctness from his singers and was never satisfied until the last measure of precision had been achieved by all. His insistence upon absolute musical clearness was commensurate with the clearness of his conducting and the exemplary beat of his baton, the distinctness of which was not impaired by even the most violent emotion.⁶⁶

While this passage alone gives the impression that Mahler was a pedantic Classicist, perhaps in the vein of Karl Muck (see below), Walter goes on to clarify that Mahler's performances "never gave the impression of machine-like precision." He further notes that his "exactitude" was rarely mentioned either by critics or audiences, because to him, such precision of execution was "but a means to an end, and this end was— soulfulness." Mahler's performances, according to Walter, "produced the effect of spontaneous improvisation." Responding to the widespread criticism by Mahler's contemporaries of his approach to Viennese Classical repertoire, Walter insisted that:

There was no arbitrariness at all in his interpretations. That he was accused of it merely proves the difference between his inspired presentation and that which was traditionally accepted. If he did make changes in classical works they were directed against the letter and in favor of the clearly recognized spirit.

What these comments indicate is that in his approach to Classical orchestral scores like Beethoven's symphonies, Mahler combined pristine technical discipline with a fair degree of interpretive license. Walter's account in particular strongly suggests that both the much-reviled reorchestrations as well as tempo modifications were used to communicate the underlying spirit of the work, rather than transmitting the notated contents of a score.

⁶⁶ Bruno Walter and Lotte Walter Lindt, *Gustav Mahler* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1958), 79-80.

The only recordings Mahler made were piano rolls of his own works. However, one can get a sense of how his live performances may have sounded from the recordings of the conductors who worked with and were directly influenced by him: Willem Mengelberg, Oskar Fried, Bruno Walter, and Otto Klemperer among others. Walter's earliest recordings may be the most representative of Mahler's conducting aesthetics, given that he had by far the closest working relationship with Mahler. The characteristics the two likely had in common include dynamic intensity, a propensity for slower tempi in lyrical passages, and high technical standards.

As far as the reorchestration of Classical repertoire was concerned, Mahler's approach was admittedly more radical than that of Wagner and his disciples. For instance, he added an offstage woodwind band to the score of the finale of Beethoven's *Ninth*.⁶⁷ Viennese critics panned Mahler for these alterations, despite considering Wagner's changes more or less standard. Kristen Knittel suggests that the criticism of Mahler's efforts were motivated not by aesthetic disagreements, but by antisemitism. This assertion is supported by her study of the press reviews, many of which contain both coded and more overt references to Mahler's Jewish heritage. The scholar argues "Mahler was being judged not as a conductor or even as a reviser, but as a Jew."⁶⁸ Knittel's work reminds us to read contemporary accounts critically, particularly when dealing with aspects of performance practice. Ethnic and personal biases inevitably influence a critic's perceptions, including those of a reviewed musician's performance aesthetics. Indeed, the critical vitriol directed at Mahler's reorchestrations of Beethoven bears a striking resemblance to Wagner's similarly motivated earlier attacks on Mendelssohn's conducting practices. In both cases, we ought to be careful in evaluating such critical judgments, rather than

⁶⁷ Raymond Holden, "The Iconic Symphony: Performing Beethoven's Ninth Wagner's Way," *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 4.

⁶⁸ K. Knittel, "'Polemik Im Concertsaal': Mahler, Beethoven, and the Viennese Critics," *19th-Century Music* 29, no. 3 (2006): 290.

taking them at face value. It is also important to note that while by this time, Wagner's reorchestrations of Beethoven were already commonplace, the degree to which they were applied varied from conductor to conductor. Debates did occur over the extent to which such reorchestrations were necessary, so in that respect, critical commentary on Mahler's choices was to be expected. It is the level of disdain directed at Mahler's efforts and the often specious arguments used by some critics to justify their views that prove out of character for the late nineteenth-century concert culture. Furthermore, when the gentile conductor Willem Mengelberg made similarly far-reaching changes to the scoring of Beethoven's symphonies (see below), his choices were met with none of the condemnation Mahler's had received.

Conductors Who Made Recordings

The following section will introduce nine conductors, trained and professionally active in the late nineteenth century, who had made recordings of at least one movement of a Beethoven symphony, and will thus be featured prominently in the remainder of this thesis. As many in this group now lack the name recognition enjoyed by their colleagues discussed above, I will start by giving a brief outline of their careers, before discussing their performance aesthetics and approach to conducting, as revealed in their own extant writings (for the reception of their performances, see Chapter 3). Presented again in chronological order, these conductors are: George Henschel, Artur Nikisch, Karl Muck, Max Fiedler, Franz Schalk, Felix Weingartner, Richard Strauss, Arturo Toscanini, and Willem Mengelberg.

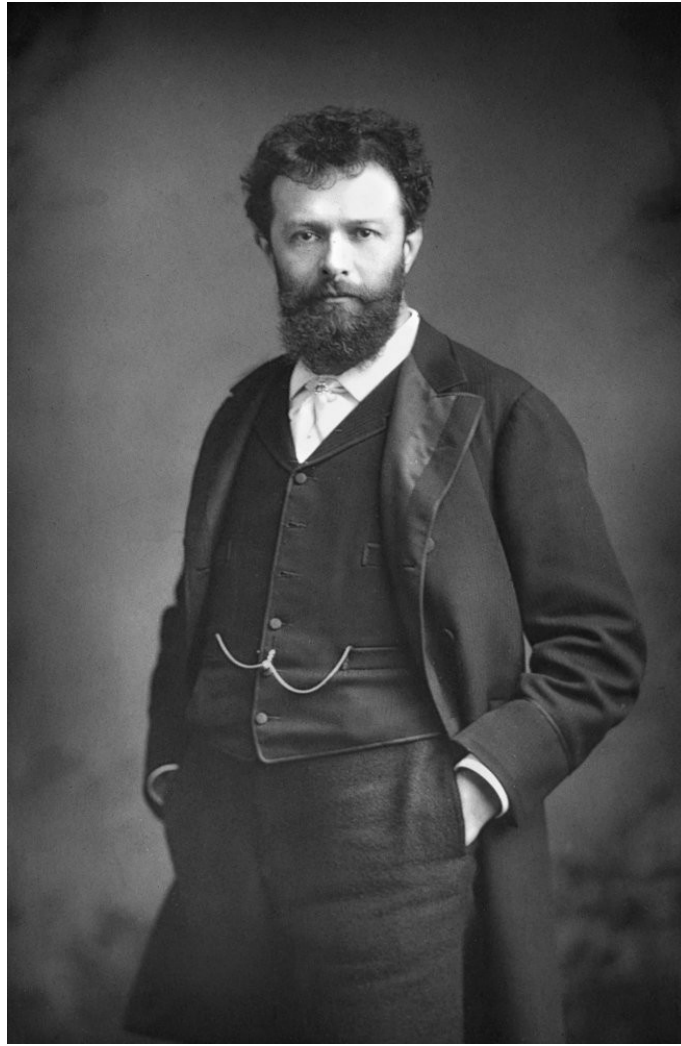
George Henschel

Figure 4: Photograph of George Henschel

George Henschel (1850-1934) was best known during his lifetime as a baritone, specializing in *Lieder*, particularly those of Franz Schubert. In his youth, he studied piano with Ignaz Moscheles, who himself had been a pupil of Beethoven. This makes Henschel unique among the conductors who left recordings of Beethoven's symphonies: he is the only one who trained under one of the composer's own students. Later in his career, Henschel also enjoyed a close relationship with Johannes Brahms, with correspondence surviving between the two. Their

letters include illuminating discussions of aesthetic and practical performance matters, such as Brahms's disapproval of his own metronome markings, and Henschel's experiments with rearranging the seating of musicians in the orchestras he conducted, as he was evidently unsatisfied with their traditional placements. While Brahms clearly approved of Henschel's innovations, they did not seem to have caught on. Still, Henschel's attempts demonstrate that as a conductor, he was not an unwavering stickler for tradition, and at least in terms of ensemble placement, was willing to make changes that he felt would better serve the work. That said, Henschel's extant writings reveal disapproval of Romantic attitudes toward conducting the Viennese Classical repertoire, with particular disdain for the widespread use of tempo modification. For example, in a 1920 review that critiques the liberties one of his colleagues had evidently taken with Beethoven, he appoints himself the master's champion, as well as reveals his preference for the Classical approach to conducting the classics, sating:

Here that gentleman was vociferously applauded by the audience and [...] lauded to the skies by the Press, the one or two papers which were bold enough to timidly admit his "occasionally taking liberties with Beethoven" declaring such liberties to be those of "an intimate, an adept."

Intimate indeed! If a hundred years ago an intimate of Beethoven's had dared to do such a thing in Beethoven's presence, the master [...] would have flung the score at his head, thundering, "Knave, canst thou not read? Dost thou think if I had wanted those two general pauses, I did not know how to put them in my score?"

What are we coming to? Irreverence, contempt of traditions, breaking with a glorious past, disregard of law, of form. [...] Fancy an actor, tired of that everlasting "To be or not to be," and thinking it too hackneyed, surprising the audience by commencing the great monologue for a change with "To exist or not to exist."⁶⁹

The analogy is certainly instructive in illuminating Henschel's view on Romantic performance practices such as tempo modification and reorchestration. To him, such changes would not earn the composer's approval; not only were they unnecessary, but also motivated solely by the search for novelty. Indeed, it is notable that Henschel regarded this Romantic performance style

⁶⁹ George Henschel, "On Interpretation in Music," *The London Mercury*, April 1920, 704.

as modern, while rendering the score with steady tempi was presented as the older and more traditional way to conduct the Viennese Classical works.

Artur Nikisch



Figure 5: Photograph of Artur Nikisch

Artur Nikisch (1855-1922) was one of the oldest virtuoso conductors to make recordings for posterity. His career was meteoric: at the age of 24, he assumed the leadership of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; by the age of 30, he succeeded Carl Reinecke as the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and followed Hans von Bülow as the principal conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic, the two posts he would hold for the remainder of his life. Nikisch was notable in his lifetime for his highly expressive and Romantic-styled renderings of the Viennese classics, while earning the praise of contemporary composers like Brahms and Tchaikovsky for his interpretations of their newest works.

In his formative years, Nikisch performed as an orchestral violinist under Richard Wagner's own baton, and it is plausible that the conductor's recorded performances of Beethoven preserve the elements of Wagner's interpretations. Indeed, Nikisch himself cites Wagner's performances of Beethoven as the foundation for his own overall approach to the repertoire, stating: "What I learned in the four rehearsals Wagner held with us had a huge influence on my whole artistic career [...] I can say that Wagner's *Eroica* in Vienna and then the *Ninth* at Bayreuth turned out to be crucial for my conception of Beethoven as a whole, indeed, for my orchestral interpretation in general."⁷⁰

Karl Muck



Figure 6: Photograph of Karl Muck

⁷⁰ Dyment, *Conducting Brahms*, 56.

Karl Muck (1859-1940) was perhaps most famous in his lifetime for his interpretations of Wagner, notably *Parsifal*. Although he likely did not have any personal encounters with Richard Wagner himself, he was one of the first notable conductors when the *Festspielhaus* was under the directorship of Wagner's widow, Cosima. In the 1910s, Muck served as the principal conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Despite the political hostilities he faced, his interpretations not only of Wagner, but also of the Viennese classics were highly regarded during his lifetime.⁷¹

In an interview he gave to the New York Times in 1906, Muck had the following to say about the conductor's role in music making:

In giving compositions he should not sound the personal note. His own personality has nothing whatever to do with it. To attempt to give an individual interpretation of the work of a composer is often to give exactly what the composer did not mean. The only way is to find the meaning of the composer and give his works as nearly as possible in the real and true style.⁷²

From this statement, Muck appears to advocate against the Romantic interpretation (including constant tempo modifications) applied to Viennese Classical works, or to any work for that matter, unless expressly sanctioned by the composer. Notably, Muck also expressed gratitude to the American critics, who he claimed to have understood his aesthetic goals. And the existing critical reviews of Muck's American performances do in fact concur with his own stated aims, as I explore in more depth in Chapter 3.

⁷¹ In 1917, after the United States began its involvement in World War I, allying itself with Britain and France against Germany, the anti-German hysteria swept across the nation. Even though Muck was a Swiss citizen, his German ancestry made him a target for xenophobia. After a scandal broke out over Muck refusing to conduct the Star-Spangled Banner, Muck was accused of having been a German spy, and placed in internment for such reasons.

⁷² "Dr. Muck Praises Boston Symphony Orchestra," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1906.

Max Fiedler

Figure 7: Photograph of Max Fiedler

Max Fiedler (1859-1939) came to conducting relatively late in life, after his earlier career as a piano virtuoso and pedagogue based in Hamburg was curtailed by an injury. His conducting engagements spanned the 1890s, and he gained a permanent position with the Hamburg Philharmonic in 1904. Although there is a lack of documentation on Fiedler's artistic views, Bülow seems to have been his defining influence as a conductor. Inspired to take up conducting as a profession after having heard Bülow's orchestral performances, Fiedler also had a chance to observe his rehearsals closely, and evidently took great pains to emulate his conducting style.⁷³

⁷³ Dyment, *Conducting Brahms*, 72-73.

Vienna State Opera House in 1919, sharing the post with Richard Strauss.⁷⁴ As director of the Vienna Opera, Schalk retained many of the changes Mahler had put into place, which, once regarded as innovations, were by that time established as traditions. Although Schalk's own views on the conductor's art are scarcely documented, multiple sources credit him with statements such as: "It is not he who conducts the music, but the music which leads him,"⁷⁵ or "It is not I who conducted *Tristan [und Isolde]*, it is *Tristan* who conducted me."⁷⁶ If these attributions are accurate, they suggest that Schalk held a self-effacing attitude to conducting, similar to that of Muck. Schalk's artistic aim was not to inject his personality into the music, but to achieve transparency as a performer, letting the music speak for itself.

⁷⁴ The artistic differences between the two ultimately led to Strauss's resignation in 1924. See Holden, *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life*, 95-97.

⁷⁵ Henry Prunieres, "Paris Season Varied: Mengelberg, Franz Schalk and Furtwaengler Triumph in Brilliant Performances," *The New York Times*, June 24, 1928.

⁷⁶ Raymond Petit, "Franz Schalk [Obituary]," *La Revue Musicale*, translation mine.

Felix Weingartner

Figure 9: Photograph of Felix Weingartner

Felix Weingartner (1863-1942), despite having been a prolific composer, found far more success as a conductor. Throughout his lifetime, he found himself in company with many prominent Romantic-era composers. As a young musician, he was well acquainted with Franz Liszt, and had met Richard Wagner on at least one occasion.⁷⁷ A prominent Wagnerian, Weingartner developed a close rapport and admiration for Hermann Levi, who premiered

⁷⁷ In addition, his rendering of Brahms's Symphony No. 2 earned admiration and enthusiasm from the composer himself – a rare honor as Brahms was often critical of conductors' handling of his works, including such luminaries as Hans Richter and Hans von Bülow.

Parsifal in 1882. Following Levi's retirement and death, Weingartner became a vocal critic of Cosima's influence on Bayreuth's performance practice, such as the increasingly slow tempi on which she insisted, a criticism echoed by Strauss.

Although he conducted a diverse range of repertoires, Weingartner had a particular affinity for the works of Beethoven. He claimed in his memoirs to have met and conversed with an elderly woman named Helene Grebner who had sung in the choir at the premiere of *The Ninth*.⁷⁸ It would certainly be a stretch to claim that Weingartner's own interpretation bears any similarity to the original performance just from that alleged encounter, nor does he make such a claim. Still, the connection was clearly significant to him, as it is mentioned in more than one extant source traceable to him.⁷⁹

In his manual on conducting, Weingartner also professes admiration for Wagner's conducting aesthetics, yet his is not an unconditional approval. While he agreed with Wagner's practice of modifying the tempo to suit a work's *melos*, Weingartner detested what he felt were exaggerations of this practice by others. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that Weingartner had never actually seen Wagner conduct, thus his ideas of his performance practice were gleaned from the Master's writings, and may not have matched the reality of his interpretations.

⁷⁸ Weingartner, *Buffets and Rewards*, 234.

⁷⁹ Weingartner published an account of his meeting in the journal *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, the story also appears in his book *Akkorde* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 1-2.

Richard Strauss

Figure 10: Photographs of Richard Strauss

Richard Strauss (1864-1949) spent the majority of his conducting career in opera houses, most notably the Vienna State Opera and the Berlin State Opera. In his youth, he worked closely with Hans von Bülow, whom he would later acknowledge as the main influence on his approach to conducting. As Strauss's comments on von Bülow quoted earlier reveal, Strauss shared the intellectual and calculated approach practiced by his mentor. For instance, both favored the use of rubato in conducting, although Strauss most likely used tempo modification to a lesser extent than Bülow, given his admonition that "any modification of tempo made necessary by the

character of a phrase should be carried out imperceptibly so that the unity of tempo remains intact.”⁸⁰ In other words, the fluctuations should not be obvious to the listener.

Strauss was perhaps best known, even notorious, for his economy of gestures, especially later in his conducting career. As he himself explains, “the left hand has nothing to do with conducting. Its proper place belongs in the waistcoat pocket from which it should only emerge to restrain or to make some minor gesture for which in any case a scarcely perceptible glance would suffice.”⁸¹ This emotionless appearance while conducting, combined with a lack of outward sentimentality in his rendering of the Viennese classics, led his critics to accuse him of being bored by conducting. However, it seems that Strauss was instead holding to a performance aesthetic that did not generate the same kind of outward expressiveness, so famously displayed by his colleague Nikisch.

In his approach to the Viennese classics, Strauss fully embraced Wagner’s reorchestrations of Beethoven, but criticized Mahler’s efforts as excessive, although unlike Vienna’s antisemitic critics, his objections were aesthetic, rather than ethnic. Furthermore, unlike Mahler, Strauss did not reorchestrate any of Mozart’s symphonies and operas he conducted, preferring instead to consult that composer’s original manuscripts.⁸² Although this approach may bear resemblance to today’s historically informed interpretations, his choice of tempo in Mozart follows a direct lineage from Wagner and Hans von Bülow.

⁸⁰ Strauss, *Recollections*, 45.

⁸¹ Strauss, 44.

⁸² Raymond Holden, *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 54.

Arturo Toscanini

Figure 11: Photograph of Arturo Toscanini

Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) made his conducting debut at the age of nineteen for a production of Verdi's *Aida*, while on tour as an orchestral cellist for an opera troupe. Before turning to conducting as a career, he performed as a cellist in Italian opera productions, one of the more notable ones having been Verdi's *Otello*, with the composer at the podium. After later assuming artistic leadership of La Scala, Toscanini would develop a close rapport with Verdi and routinely consult him on matters of interpretations. It is likely he shared a similar conducting style to Verdi, especially given the composer's somewhat critical remarks on "tempo rubato" conducting.

Although Toscanini never recorded down his own views on conducting aesthetics, he collaborated with writers such as Bernard H. Haggin to publicize them. Particularly illuminating with respect to Toscanini's aesthetic values are his extant critical remarks on his fellow conductors. For example, Haggin recalls Toscanini's displeasure with the tempi German conductors took, including Richter's tempi for *Eroica*. He reportedly exclaimed: "All German conductors play too slow! Muck! Was terrible! Orchestra [Boston Symphony] was wonderful, [...] and everything so slow! Muck was Beckmesser of conductors!"⁸³

Equally telling are Toscanini's comments on Wagner's conducting. It must be noted that as he had never seen Wagner himself conduct, his knowledge of his approach came from secondary sources such as William Ashton Ellis's biography.⁸⁴ Commenting to Haggin on the description of Wagner conducting Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony, Toscanini mused in broken English: "He must play slow movement like Germans – too slow. He make big ritard in last part of Minuet; but where? Is clear, Wagner conduct *a piacere* [with liberty]; but I cannot imagine what they say he do."⁸⁵ Like Strauss, Toscanini seemed to have held a disdain for overt showmanship in conducting, as displayed by Nikisch. While Toscanini acknowledged the latter's skills, he contrasted himself with Nikisch by stating: "When I conduct I am always prepared. I do not stand before the public to show I am Toscanini – never!"⁸⁶

Toscanini's opinions of German conductors are hardly unbiased, and he was certainly prone to exaggeration. Despite his criticism of Muck's slow tempi, for instance, it was Toscanini, and not Muck, who conducted the slowest performance of Wagner's *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in the first half of the twentieth century. Toscanini's main problem with Muck seems to have been not

⁸³ Haggin, *Conversations with Toscanini*, 50. All grammatical infelicities are in the original.

⁸⁴ Carl Friedrich Glasenapp and William Ashton Ellis, *Life of Richard Wagner* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1908).

⁸⁵ Haggin, 51. Toscanini was likely referring to a review written by Henry Smart, quoted in Ellis, *Life of Richard Wagner*, Vol. V, 312-313.

⁸⁶ Haggin, 81.

the tempi so much, but rather the latter's supposed pedantry in interpretation. Evidently, he objected to both conducting extremes: the overly indulgent performances, like those of Nikisch, as much as those lacking in vitality, like Muck's. His own aesthetic, as revealed in these critiques, includes commitment to the written score, as well as a desire for a musically expressive performance.

Willem Mengelberg



Figure 12: Photograph of Willem Mengelberg

Willem Mengelberg (1871-1951) was the principal conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra for almost 50 years, from 1895 until 1944. He studied under Franz Wüllner, a notable nineteenth-century conductor, who in turn counted Anton Schindler as one of his mentors. Mengelberg mostly programmed late-Romantic and early modernist works, including those by Mahler and Strauss, with both of whom he had a close rapport. He was also acquainted with Tchaikovsky's brother Modest, who praised Mengelberg's conducting of his brother's works. However, his Nazi sympathies during WWII severely tainted his posthumous legacy.

Mengelberg did not publish any of his views on the matter of interpretation, and little written documentation exists on his own conducting aesthetics. His annotated scores of Mahler, however, reveal that his use of dynamics and rubato were carefully planned out in advance. Judging from his recordings, he was extremely liberal in reorchestrating both Classical and more modern works. Bernard Shore, the principal violist of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, recalls Mengelberg to have claimed:

Beethoven, like many other composers, sometimes made changements in his scores, even after publication, and then he also was deaf. So vy not the conductor also, who often knows mooch better than the composer? I vos de best pupil of Svhidler [Schindler], who vos the best pupil of Beethoven, zo I know vat Beethoven meant. Zo, in dis verk of Strauss [Ein Heldenleben]; I haf been great friend of Richard Strauss since I vos a boy, and I know joost what he wants, and ve vill make some changements also!⁸⁷

If accurately reported, this comment reveals Mengelberg's belief that by changing the score, a conductor is expressing what the composer surely envisioned, especially if that composer (like the "deaf" Beethoven) lacked the ability to execute his ideas to their fullest potential. Likewise, Mengelberg justified making large cuts in the last movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 based on a conversation he allegedly had with Modest.⁸⁸ There is zero documentary evidence to

⁸⁷ Bernard Shore, *The Orchestra Speaks* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1938), 119, quoted in Samir Goleescu, "The Recorded Heritage of Willem Mengelberg and Its Aesthetic Influence" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014), 50-51.

⁸⁸ Goleescu, "The Recorded Heritage of Willem Mengelberg and Its Aesthetic Relevance," 21.

confirm Mengelberg's account, and even if the conversation had taken place, it is unlikely that Modest's claims would represent his brother's genuine wishes. Clearly, the claims of insider knowledge through personal connection used by Mengelberg to justify his changes to the scores he conducted fall far short of today's scholarly standards, if not the much less demanding ones of the late nineteenth century.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the most important virtuoso conductors, whose training and careers encompassed the late nineteenth century, with a particular focus on those who had left recordings of Beethoven's symphonies. While including some critical accounts of conductors who did not record (such as von Bülow and Richter), my discussion of the conductors who did was deliberately limited to analyzing their own statements (as made in public and private writings, or as reported by others) to discern their own professed aesthetic goals and views of themselves as interpretive artists. Among these goals and views, the manner in which the Viennese Classical repertoire ought to be approached was an important shared concern, with a number of conductors expressing well thought out ideas on the subject. Judging from these statements, an aesthetic dichotomy between "Classical" vs "Romantic" approaches to conducting the classics like Beethoven and Mozart was firmly established by the late Romantic era. Without ever using the terms, the conductors discussed above clearly perceived and publicly presented themselves as embodying either one aesthetic position or the other, with little room for compromise. In the next chapter, I will focus on how their contemporary critics judged these conductors' performances, in order to discover whether and how the rhetoric was reflected in musical practice, as well as whether and to what extent the critics discerned and agreed with the conductors' aesthetic goals.

Chapter 3

In the previous chapter, I surveyed the artistic views of late nineteenth-century conductors who had left recordings of Beethoven symphonies. I now examine contemporary press accounts, as well as recollections from colleagues to show how these observers judged the conductors' live performances. Specifically, I aim to evaluate how each artist's conducting style was perceived during their lifetime and to what extent their performances reflected their aesthetic goals. As in the previous chapter, I address the conductors in chronological order.

George Henschel

Boston critics gave Henschel a mixed reception during his tenure with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. George Bozarth, in his monograph on George Henschel and Johannes Brahms, attributes this in part to his supposedly Wagnerian conducting style, to which Boston critics were unaccustomed.⁸⁹ On a closer examination of the press accounts, the critics seem to have been particularly surprised by Henschel's unorthodox tempo choices, yet they did not appear to have attributed them to Wagner's influence. Indeed, while many of these same critics were transparent in discussing the Romantic attributes of other conductors, such as Fiedler and Nikisch, none made any such comments about Henschel. For example, in 1881, the critic William Foster Apthorp claimed:

[Henschel's] readings are, in truth, often puzzling – less from their individual character than from a certain difficulty that one cannot but feel in detecting any definite and coherent musical purpose. [...] It is hard to reconcile his conception of one work with his totally different reading of another of similar character.⁹⁰

Clearly, Apthorp was not criticizing Henschel for any excessive rubato or other such Wagnerian traits. Rather, it seems that the critic did not find Henschel's performances as a whole

⁸⁹ George S. Bozarth, *Johannes Brahms & George Henschel: An Enduring Friendship* (Sterling Heights, Mich.: Harmonie Park Press, 2008), 77.

⁹⁰ William Foster Apthorp, *The Musical Herald*, December 1881, 264.

entirely convincing. This might be attributed to the unorthodox tempo choices in various sections of the works he conducted, the characteristic particularly noted by the critic Louis C. Elson. In a review of Henschel's performances of Beethoven symphonies, Elson remarked: "That [Henschel] individualizes classical works, and departs from honored models in many cases, few will deny. The taking of the *allegro ma non troppo* of the Fourth Beethoven Symphony, at a pace which made it an *allegro con brio*, was an instance of this."⁹¹ The word "individualize" used here is ambiguous, and in the context of late nineteenth-century criticism can imply a Romantic interpretation, laden with tempo modifications. However, Elson makes it clear that he is objecting to Henschel's overall tempo choices. In this sense, although Apthorp described the conductor's renditions as distinctly not of an "individual character," the two critics agreed that Henschel took certain sections too fast, and others unusually slow. For instance, although Elson praised Henschel's performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, he criticized "a few blemishes in the tempo of two movements [...] the *accelerando* leading to the *Trio* became something of a scramble. The final part of the choral movement was also taken too rapidly."⁹² For these critics, Henschel's objectionable tempo choices resulted in peculiar and at times unsatisfying renditions of the Viennese Classical works

As I will discuss in Chapter 4, some of the tempi Henschel takes in his recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 could be seen as unconventional. Yet notably, this recording, made in 1927 to commemorate the centenary of Beethoven's death, was well received by *The Phonograph Monthly* at the time of its release. Despite Henschel having made it towards the end of his life, the anonymous reviewer commented that he was "far from impaired in his powers."⁹³ The critic characterized Henschel's tempo of the *Allegro con brio* in the first movement as "very

⁹¹ Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, January 1882, 5.

⁹² Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, April 1882, 93.

⁹³ "Analytical Notes and Reviews," *The Phonograph Monthly Review*, April 1927, 318.

mild,” and conceded that the performance lacked brilliance before making up for it in the coda. In a similar vein, the reviewer argued that the third movement’s minuet was “read in the old style,” and was consequently “lacking in fleetness and energy to ears accustomed to the newer and more virtuoso fashion.” Overall, the reviewer commends the recording for having the advantages of “the work of a very old man,” and that more broadly, “the whole [recording] is a remarkably faithful and characteristic example of the old German ‘classic’ school and its value as such is naturally high.”

Although this review was written about fifty years after those documenting Henschel’s concerts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, it notably supports the earlier accounts, further elucidating the conductor’s aesthetic style. By the late 1920s, Henschel had earned a reputation as a veteran musician, resulting in a more appreciative outlook on the conductor. Thus, while the reviewer for *The Phonograph Monthly* speaks more reverently of Henschel and does rank his recording highly, his descriptions of the tempi still match those of the Boston critics, and the phrases such as “very mild” and “lacking brilliance” reveal a certain confusion over the conductor’s choices. What is more revealing still is the review’s characterization of the recording as representative of the “classic” school. Even though this critic was ambivalent over some of the slower tempi, he clearly considered Henschel’s aesthetic to be more traditional, and perhaps even representing a style that existed prior to the age of virtuoso conducting.

This would make sense, given that Henschel was not primarily a conductor, but rather a singer of *Lieder*. Indeed, his singing career may help explain why some of his tempi were so strange, despite his conservative, *Texttreue* aesthetic. It is possible that Henschel did not have the same familiarity with the orchestral repertoire, and having been essentially self-taught as a conductor, may not have possessed the same technical facility in the art as he did in his singing.

While he did study with Moscheles in his youth, it is unlikely that Moscheles would have taken these kinds of tempi. This is admittedly speculation; but because Moscheles only taught Henschel piano, it is unlikely, even if they discussed the tempi for Beethoven's piano works, that they discussed interpretations of his orchestral works in any depth.

Judging from the reviews alone, one could reasonably get the impression that Henschel conducted in a highly Romantic fashion. This does not seem to have been the case, however, at least as far as tempo modification is concerned. As discussed in Chapter 2, Henschel is on record sharply criticizing that practice. Similarly, the reviewers also make no mention of it in his conducting, even while they do so for other artists. Finally, as I will demonstrate in my analysis of his recording of Beethoven's First Symphony in Chapter 4, there is no evidence of tempo fluctuation on that recording. It appears that the terms such as "unorthodox" and "individualize," which his critics use, refer primarily to the baseline tempi he took and the overall character of the performance.

Artur Nikisch

While Viennese critics of the 1890s praised Nikisch's interpretations of Viennese classics, his tenure in Boston was much more contentious. Boston critics often compared him unfavorably to his predecessor Wilhelm Gericke, and blamed Nikisch for the orchestra's declining technical standards. Still, he did also garner praise for his outwardly expressive interpretations of Beethoven. For instance, the critic Louis Elson contrasted him to Gericke, claimed that "he is far more emotional than Mr. Gericke, and his readings are as enthusiastic as those of the latter gentleman were polished."⁹⁴ It appears from Elson's critique that the Boston public was not accustomed to such "enthusiasm" in performances of Beethoven's symphonies,

⁹⁴ Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, November 1889, 256.

and that Gericke's conducting aesthetic differed from that of Nikisch. In another review, Elson elaborates on these differences, stating:

Mr. Nikisch is a conductor of very different mould from Mr. Gericke. Where the latter was conservative the former is radical; where Mr. Gericke attended to every minute detail, Mr. Nikisch seems to allow details to take care of themselves, and attends only to the broad poetic style of a composition.⁹⁵

While Elson admitted that the orchestra now possessed "more fiery readiness and more massive power," he also argued that as a result, the high technical standards which Gericke had achieved were no longer in evidence. Gericke seems to have been a conductor of the more Classical style, possibly bearing resemblance to Muck, or even some of the Kapellmeisters whom Wagner so famously detested. Although reviews such as Elson's imply a lack of preparedness, it is just as likely that Nikisch sought spontaneity, where many of the minute details are left to chance during the performance itself, a quality revealed from his recordings that I will discuss in greater depth in Chapter 4.

In his review, Elson notably describes Nikisch as a Romantic conductor of a Wagnerian bent, writing: "That Mr. Nikisch will interpret Beethoven in a noble manner is surely to be predicted, that he will take some liberties with the composer's score is equally certain, but then has not Wagner given his sanction to such innovations in his famous pamphlet - 'Uber das Dirigiren!'" Two of the critic's points are significant here. Firstly, Nikisch's style is compared directly with Wagner's conducting practices, which critics such as Elson clearly recognized and saw Nikisch as emulating. And secondly, flexible tempi in Beethoven's symphonies were evidently still thought of as "innovations," even as late as the 1890s.

Based on extant press accounts, late nineteenth and early twentieth-century critics were typically in agreement that, while the use of rubato was appropriate in Romantic-era works, it

⁹⁵ Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, January 1890, 19.

was out of place in the Viennese Classical repertoire. This agreement is reflected in Elson's critique, in which he observed that Nikisch's rendering of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was "a theatrical and at the same time a rough performance," while simultaneously praising his interpretation of Liszt's *Les Preludes* as "beyond any performance of the work that has ever been given in Boston."

Elson's sentiment was echoed in an 1895 account of a Queen's Hall Concert in London. The anonymous reviewer noted the "peculiarities of style" in Nikisch's rendering of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, observing that the conductor "seemed more completely at home in Grieg's *Peer Gynt* Suite, one movement being encored."⁹⁶ Other critics took similar issues with the liberties Nikisch evidently took in performing Beethoven. Henry Edward Krehbiel, while complaining about Theodore Thomas and Walter Damrosch taking Romantic license in their performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, placed Nikisch into the same category. Specifically, he argues that Nikisch performs the "bewitched entrance of the introduction to the first *allegro* in so labored and heavy-footed a manner and substitutes such a sluggishness in the movement for its bright, cheery incisiveness that to enjoy it becomes impossible."⁹⁷ Helen A. Clarke, writing in *Music: A Monthly Magazine* in 1894, was even more scathing of Nikisch's overtly sentimental performance, which she evidently believed was unsuitable for Beethoven's works that to her demanded dignity and restraint. Commenting on what she called an "affectation of expression" that marred Nikisch's interpretations, Clarke stated: "I have heard Nikisch actually scurry through one of Beethoven's incomparable adagios in a way to make the heart sick, and send one home from a concert wondering if, after all, something was not the matter with Beethoven."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ "Queen's Hall Concert," *The Monthly Musical Record*, July 1, 1895, 161-162.

⁹⁷ H. E. Krehbiel, *The Musical Herald*, April 1892, 94-95.

⁹⁸ Helen A. Clarke, *Music: A Monthly Magazine*, May 1894, 7-8.

The Romantic style in which Nikisch performed Beethoven symphonies seems to have caught the English-speaking critics by surprise. From these accounts, they were most likely not accustomed to such flamboyant interpretation of Viennese Classical works, and thus perceived this style as something new. Here is what Elson had to say of Nikisch's excesses in his Beethoven performances:

The Beethoven Symphony (the fifth), however, was made very bombastic and unnatural. The great "destiny" figure was distorted by dwelling on its last note, and every *forte* passage was given in a manner to wake the dead. The final movement, however, was able to bear this treatment, and was given with a fervor that suited it well, and the contrabasses played their celebrated passage in the trio of the Scherzo in a magnificent manner, so that the audience was not altogether wrong when at the end of the concert it recalled Mr. Nikisch again and again.⁹⁹

Overall, most critics seemed to have believed that Nikisch's style was better suited for Romantic compositions, in which the music itself contained more emotion, and less emphasis on form and structure. The Boston critics, at the very least, seem to have objected to the conductor's more sentimental interpretations of Beethoven and other Classical compositions. Nikisch's interpretations of Beethoven, as preserved on his recordings, would likely have been perceived in this light. The lack of a clear pulse and a lesser degree of ensemble precision, heard in the recordings, are fully confirmed by contemporary accounts of the conductor's live performances. These critiques suggest that this was not a standard method of interpreting the Classical repertoire.

Karl Muck

Boston critics from the early twentieth century were unanimous in characterizing Muck as a Classicist, who favored minimal rubato and advocated fidelity to the written score. An

⁹⁹ Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, December 1889, 286.

anonymous journalist writing in the *New Music Review and Church Music Review* in 1913

stated:

Always he stood as an interpreter of the composer's work, never as one displaying himself, his personality, his temperament, or impressing them upon the music, or endeavoring to find in it something that no one else had found, or anything that the composer had not put there. Such Dr. Muck showed himself again to be; and in some of these respects he differs markedly from some other modern conductors.¹⁰⁰

In a 1906 review for the same journal, Muck was introduced as “a thinker, and an analyst,” and his interpretations were described as “those of an earnest seeker after the composer's meaning, without putting into his performances the personal influences that modern conductors often bring to this task.” The reviewer went on to describe Muck's reading of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 thus: “He put many finely wrought nuances in the symphony by Beethoven, but he sought for no new and startling features. It was not a Wagnerized version.”¹⁰¹

It is interesting that despite Muck's close association with Wagner's music, his rendition of Beethoven was perceived as non-Wagnerian. This indicates that Muck may not have followed the same approach to Beethoven as other prominent conductors of Wagner's music. Note, for instance, a review of his performance of Beethoven's *Seventh*, which a critic described as “sane, strong and dignified, instinct with life [sic], with the meaning and significance of each phrase, and seeking at no point to find any new sensation.”¹⁰²

Likewise, in a review of Muck's performance of Beethoven's *Eroica*, the critic Edgar Istel proclaimed:

[Muck] at once gave proof that he is the man who can hold an orchestra under strong discipline, and in whom, especially, the word “In the beginning was rhythm” seems translated into flesh and blood, and at times, perhaps, he considers this more than the free treatment of the melodic line. Yet even the latter he can make stand out prominently.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, January 1913, 12.

¹⁰¹ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, December 1906, 21.

¹⁰² *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, March 1907, 247-248.

¹⁰³ Dr. Edgar Istel, *The Monthly Musical Record*, March 1, 1912, 63.

The phrase “In the beginning was rhythm,” was a quite well-known precept attributed to Hans von Bülow. Istel’s description of Muck’s conducting, however, does not match German-language accounts of Bülow’s, for the latter reportedly combined precise rhythmic executions with extensive tempo modifications. Muck, by contrast, did not employ such rubato in order to emphasize a work’s melodic qualities, at least according to Istel, whose observations further confirm the conductor’s Classical approach. The critic went on to state the following about Muck’s conducting:

He possesses wonderfully fine feeling for the richest and most varied toning down of orchestral colouring, also for gradations of tone. He seems strongly inclined to adopt broad tempi, yet all the same, he understands the art of working up to a climax, and of specially accentuating the highest point. Hence, under his direction the total effect was most impressive.

Such statements reveal that despite his perceived fidelity to the composer’s intentions, Muck’s performances were perceived not as boring and dry but as impressive and captivating, with his technical command over the orchestra viewed as particularly praiseworthy. Notably, critics use strikingly similar language to describe Muck’s conducting aesthetic as he himself had done. Their accounts confirm that in his performance practice he had in fact followed the *Texttreue* approach to which he claimed to aspire.

Max Fiedler

Fiedler’s conducting activities in Boston in the early 1900s are well documented in press reports. One of his early concerts in the U.S. was documented by *The New York Times*, its report then reprinted in *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*. The reviewer claimed that Fiedler had “none of the attributed of the ‘virtuoso conductor’ in the less desirable sense,” these less desirable qualities being, undoubtedly, the liberties taken with the tempo. The critic elaborated that in his opinion, Fiedler “is not a revolutionary and is not bent on finding what

none have found before him in the music he plays.”¹⁰⁴ This statement implies that Fiedler, according to the critic, did not project his own personality onto the music, and that his reading was a fairly conventional one. Besides commending the “precision and brilliancy” Fiedler achieved in the prelude to *Die Meistersinger*, the reviewer did concede that he “took the tempi with elasticity.” Yet the critic ultimately considered this rubato to have been subtle and not distracting from the “well-known and well-beloved conceptions of the music.”

Notably, this is the only critical account I found which appears to describe Fiedler’s conducting as embodying a Classical aesthetic. It is possible that this particular performance happened to be unusually traditionalist, or that the review is an outlier, as it does not appear to match other accounts of Fiedler’s performances. For instance, a critic for *The Monthly Musical Record* claimed in a 1908 review that “his reading of Tchaikowsky’s ‘Pathetic’ symphony differed in many respects from those we are accustomed to hear, and the more deliberate *tempi* adopted seemed to give the music a restraint it does not always possess.”¹⁰⁵ While not describing Fiedler as excessive or Romantic, the reviewer does point out that the conductor was interpreting even newer works in an individualistic manner. Given that Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 was still a relatively recent composition, it would have been harder to judge whether and to what extent Fiedler was taking liberties with the music.

It appears that the more opportunity American critics had to observe Fiedler’s conducting, the more they became aware of its Romantic attributes. An anonymous critic described the situation as follows:

Mr. Fiedler, who has chosen by Dr. Muck as his worthy successor, has been engaged for one year. From the two concerts he has given in this city we should infer that he is by nature romantic and a musician of sound training. He is given to over-emphasis and his sentiment is at times sheer sentimentalism. At the same time, his effects are of the kind

¹⁰⁴ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, April 1908, 289.

¹⁰⁵ *The Monthly Musical Record*, January 1, 1908, 16.

quickly appreciated and vigorously applauded by the great mass of concert-goers, who care little for finesse [...] It is true, however, that he often forces the brass so that its tone is coarse and blatant ; at his urging kettledrums cease to be musical instruments.¹⁰⁶

Although the reviewer acknowledges Fiedler's credentials, it seems that they are unable to decide what to make of his interpretive approach. The implication that Fiedler achieved a different tonal balance than Karl Muck is revealing, however. Had Fiedler's style been perceived as similar to Muck's, the reviewer would not have commented on it at such length.

A review of another Fiedler concert of the season, in the same publication, was more critical of his approach to Beethoven's Third Leonore Overture and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. The critic stated: "There is a tendency to an exaggerated modification of tempo, to retardation and acceleration and to an excessive modelling of the phrase, which destroys the repose, the continuity of line and disrupts the larger symmetry of outline, without the production of deeply felt or truly emotional effect."¹⁰⁷ Fiedler's wide-ranging tempi, noticed by many contemporary critics, were evidently perceived as sentimental, Romantic, and at times excessive. Moreover, their perceptions echo Weingartner's criticism of von Bülow and his imitators. Given that Fiedler aimed to model his conducting approach on Bülow's – including the older conductor's propensity to exaggerated tempo modifications – the Boston critics' accounts confirm that Bülow's manner was indeed evident in Fiedler's conducting practice.

Franz Schalk

Judging from the accounts in the English-language press, Schalk appears to have been a highly respected conductor, although not ranked as highly as Weingartner, Nikisch, Muck, Strauss, and other virtuoso conductors. In 1906, *The Monthly Musical Record* reported: "The

¹⁰⁶ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, December 1908, 8-9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

Viennese orchestra is remarkable for intelligence, verve and ensemble, while the conductor [Schalk] is a man who knows his scores thoroughly.”¹⁰⁸ Beyond this account of professional competence, no details of his conducting are given in this review – a revealing omission. Equally revealing is the fact that the orchestra is mentioned and praised first, before the conductor; typically, reviews of prominent conductors’ performances discuss the conductor’s approach before assessing the orchestra. This may suggest that Schalk’s style may have been reminiscent of the more traditional “Kapellmeister conducting”: in other words, that he was the type of conductor who did not possess a particularly magnetic stage persona and did not aspire to anything more complex than simply beating time to keep the ensemble together. A much later, 1927 review of Schalk’s performance of Schubert’s *Unfinished* and C-major symphonies appears to support this hypothesis. It states:

Franz Schalk and the Vienna Philharmonic were the performers, and one got an opportunity of appreciating the finish of their work, unhampered by dramatic or vocal considerations. The air of mystery at the beginning of the *Unfinished* was splendidly contrived, and set the keynote of a performance which was more dramatic and lyrical. The tone of the orchestra, however, was a little overwhelming in so small a building.¹⁰⁹

As in the earlier review, the critic places more emphasis on the orchestra than on Schalk, with the latter’s efforts being mentioned in a somewhat nonchalant tone. Once again, this is in stark contrast to the reviews of performances by the virtuoso conductors I have found, in which the critics focus on the conductors’ approach first and foremost, before the quality of the orchestra.

Overall, press accounts consistently note Schalk’s tendency to emphasize the composer’s intention over his own personality. In addition, a review from 1923 in *The Monthly Musical Record* strongly implies that Schalk had a reputation as a conservative performer. The critic compares Schalk to Wilhelm Furtwängler with respect to their respective attitudes to

¹⁰⁸ *The Monthly Musical Record*, August 1, 1906, 183.

¹⁰⁹ P.P. and N.P., “Music in Munich and Salzburg,” *The Gramophone*, September 1927, 161.

programming twentieth-century musical works. He laments: “It is only to be regretted that Furtwängler, whose artistic personality is so unique and modern, in his programmes pursues such oft trodden paths,” and goes on to claim that “in this regard Franz Schalk is far more courageous,” despite being “of a more conservative nature” than Furtwängler.¹¹⁰ Thus Schalk’s manner of conducting, including his relatively steady tempi, was viewed as more “conservative” than that of Furtwängler, who would often employ slow tempi and rubato to suit the changing melodic content within a movement. It is interesting that an early twentieth-century newspaper conceived of Furtwängler as having a modern performance style, further indicating that descriptors such as conservative and modern in performance practice have shifted meanings between that time and ours.

Felix Weingartner

Critics overwhelmingly characterized Weingartner as embodying a Classical conducting aesthetic. A reviewer from *The Musical Times* in 1898 claimed: “He inflicts no far-fetched ‘new readings’ upon us, nor is he a *tempo rubato* faddist,” while praising his “beauty of tone” and the “wonderful elasticity, combined with absolute clearness and perfection of detail,”¹¹¹ in his readings of the *Finale* of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7, and Berlioz’s *Roman Carnival Overture*. While critics did observe some rubato in Weingartner’s performances, they appear to make a distinction between Weingartner’s more measured approach to conducting, and those of his colleagues who modified the tempo with much greater frequency. This contrast is elaborated on further in a most illuminating and erudite 1903 review, appropriately signed as “Rubato.” The

¹¹⁰ *The Monthly Musical Record*, May 1, 1923, 138.

¹¹¹ *The Musical Times*, June 1, 1898, 389.

critic had this to say about Weingartner's conducting aesthetic, specifically as applied to his performances of Beethoven's symphonies:

Herr Weingartner, on the other hand, was a most decided attraction – to those, at any rate, who think that Beethoven's music should be performed so far as is possible in the spirit of the composer, and not used merely as a vehicle for displaying the idiosyncrasies of a modern conductor. From this point of view Herr Weingartner is emphatically a classical conductor. For the time being, he strives to merge his own personality in that of the composer, viewing the music so far as he is able from the composer's standpoint. There can be no doubt that this is the way in which a conductor should approach music of all kinds and all schools; but we have so many instances of late of what may be called, in opposition to the classical, the romantic school of conducting, in which the conductor aims, above all things, to give novelty and individuality to his reading by any sensational piece of charlatanism that occurs to him, that it is necessary to lay particular stress upon what is Herr Weingartner's supreme merit. His admirably sane and sympathetic attitude towards Beethoven was nobly vindicated in this festival. The performances of the nine symphonies constituted a splendid *crescendo* of triumph, beginning with a charmingly delicate and finished rendering of the first, and ending in a performance of the Choral symphony, which for breadth and vigour of style and poetic insight, was worthy to rank with Dr. Richter's finest achievements.¹¹²

Note that the critic explicitly defines the two aesthetic styles of conducting in the late nineteenth century as Classical vs Romantic, then places Weingartner squarely in the Classical camp. This implies that Weingartner's conducting style was perceived, at least by this critic, as a more appropriate performance practice for a composer such as Beethoven. Furthermore, prominent rubato in conducting is yet again portrayed as a more recent practice and is associated with the Romantic repertoire. Also intriguing is the critic's suggestion that the "more rugged aspects" of Beethoven's symphonic repertoire were more suitable to Weingartner's conducting style than the lighter and more humorous ones. Consequently, the "weightier," odd-numbered symphonies in Weingartner's interpretation were more appealing to the reviewer than the even-numbered ones.

Despite his rhetoric of embodying the spirit of the composer, the critic focuses most of his review on Weingartner the conductor, rather than the orchestral musicians or the music itself. As mentioned above, this attitude appears to be a prominent element of critical reception for late

¹¹² "In the Concert Room," *The Monthly Musical Record*, July 1, 1903, 133.

nineteenth-century virtuoso-conductors, a concept that Weingartner seems to have embodied. Note that although Schalk, like Weingartner, was restrained in his rubato use, the former did not receive the same kind of critical attention. The use – or lack thereof – of tempo modifications then did not automatically confer the status of a virtuoso on a specific conductor: in addition to technique and particular interpretive strategies, critics (and audiences) must have required a certain kind of artistic “presence.” This comes across in a review of Weingartner’s performance of Beethoven’s *Fifth* in Brussels in 1899 by Maurice Kufferath. He describes his impressions thus:

He gave an extraordinary intensity of life in rhythm and expression to the ensemble of this unique work, so powerful and so moving, tumultuous and serene, tormented, passionate, violent, tender, resigned, exulting, in turn, marvelously varied in tones and accents and nevertheless incomparably one in spirit and sentiment.¹¹³

While the critic’s praise of Weingartner’s ability to effectively portray the dramatic nature of Beethoven’s iconic work is significant in itself, equally notable is the purple prose evident in Kufferath’s writing. It is the same style of writing that E.T.A. Hoffmann, Robert Schumann, and their late nineteenth-century successors would use to describe Beethoven’s own compositions. By adopting this style, Kufferath is in essence equating Weingartner’s conducting to Beethoven’s music being performed, thus telegraphing to his audience that the conductor’s interpretation is worthy of the master’s work.

As for his more specific observations of the performance, Kufferath notes:

Mr. Weingartner confines himself strictly to the classical interpretation, and that he does not romanticise the first movement by retarding the opening theme, in order to give it an appearance of greater weight; he takes the movement in a strongly marked allegro con brio and maintains this movement quite to the end, varying only by a very slight flexion of slower tempo, so slight as with difficulty to be appreciated, in the more tender second theme.

¹¹³ M. Kufferath, *Music: A Monthly Magazine*, May 1899, 94-95.

Note the differences in Weingartner's interpretation of the first movement's opening and that of Nikisch mentioned above. It is also interesting that, according to Kufferath, Weingartner did not slow down significantly for the second theme, a practice commonly observed in Wagner's conducting of Beethoven's symphonies. This suggests that for all of Weingartner's claims to represent the true spirit of Wagnerian conducting free from excess, it is more likely that his was a far more restrained style, at least in terms of tempo modifications. Evidently, there was a divergence between Weingartner's view of himself as a conductor, and how critics described his actual practice. While Weingartner believed he conducted with the kind of rubato Wagner welcomed, free from distortions and exaggerations, critics did not seem to view Weingartner as embodying Wagnerian conducting aesthetics. Rather, they perceived his performances as Classical and representative of a *Texttreue* approach. Only one reviewer I found offers a dissenting opinion. Commenting on a performance in Leipzig in 1896, this reviewer praised Weingartner's rendition of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischutz* Overture, but qualified his remarks by noting that "it was not quite free from those licenses which every modern conductor allows himself."¹¹⁴ The latter review is especially perceptive, as his recordings which I analyze in Chapter 4 reveal noticeable, if sparing, tempo fluctuations.

Richard Strauss

Accounts of Strauss's conducting in the English-language press are sparse. This is not surprising: his activities in that area were mostly confined to German opera houses, and when he did tour, he was usually conducting his own works. Critics therefore did not comment as much on his interpretations, but rather on the merits of his compositions.

¹¹⁴ "Letter from Leipzig," *The Monthly Musical Record*, April 1, 1896, 79-80.

English-language commentary on Strauss conducting the Viennese classics is found almost exclusively in reviews of his recordings, at the time of their release. In these critiques, his interpretations elicited mixed reactions, as evident, for example, in the responses to his recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 39. A reviewer from *Gramophone* was highly critical, stating: "The new [electrical] process is at work in the recording, and a rather too ancient one, I think, in the conducting. This seems to me a workmanlike performance, but not a very poetical one. Strauss is not subtle here."¹¹⁵ The review then goes on to criticize Strauss's lack of care in ensemble balance and a lack of *piano* in the slow movement. While the critic concedes, somewhat cryptically, "that the march-discipline is good – better than one often finds it," he ultimately laments that Strauss had not conveyed more of the work's emotive qualities and dynamic nuances. By contrast, a reviewer from *The Phonograph Monthly* defends the merits of Strauss's interpretation of the work. While acknowledging that the recording had "aroused considerable discussion," the critic evidently responds to the above-quoted review when he states: "Personally, I cannot agree with those who believe that the interpretation is lacking in imagination; it is 'scholarly' rather than sentimental, to be sure, but some of us like to have Mozart as it is written."¹¹⁶ Clearly, the "Classical vs Romantic" debate over conducting interpretation extended from Beethoven to Mozart as well.

Notably, a different critic writing for *The Phonograph Monthly*, while expressing dissatisfaction with Strauss's reading of Mozart's Symphony No. 39, was quite enthusiastic of his recording of the *Jupiter Symphony*. He concurred with his colleague's opinion that Strauss was presenting Mozart's symphony as the composer had envisioned it, and further noted that the recording featured a smaller orchestra, whose proportions, he argued, reflected those of Mozart's

¹¹⁵ K. K., *The Gramophone*, August 1926, 122.

¹¹⁶ R. D. D., "Some Interesting Polydor Releases," *The Phonograph Monthly Review*, October 1926, 39.

day. He also surprisingly singled out Strauss's rendition of the *piano* passages, which he described as being "of a most exquisite and frail beauty."¹¹⁷

Such critical disagreements are reflected in the following, somewhat cryptic remark, made by an anonymous critic as part of a general discussion of recordings of Beethoven's *Seventh*: "The only other electrical set is that by Strauss and the Berlin Opera House Orchestra [...] recorded on only eight sides and considerably cut. It has not found wide favor, as opinion varies a great deal over Strauss' interpretation."¹¹⁸ In a review devoted specifically to this recording, the same critic again stated that "Strauss' interpretations always seem to arouse considerable debate and discussion and it depends largely upon one's personal taste whether he will enjoy Strauss' readings or not." The critic nevertheless went on to praise the performance, claiming that it was of a "very high calibre throughout" and that "Strauss is very successful in executing his own reading according to his own plan."¹¹⁹

Unfortunately, while these critics spend much time writing about Strauss's interpretations being controversial, they rarely explain the specific reasons for the debate. The above-quoted review of Mozart's Symphony No. 39 is perhaps the most successful in elucidating the critics' objections, yet it is also perplexing. For example, from reading the review, one might assume that Strauss avoided tempo rubato in his conducting practice. Yet his recordings of Beethoven's symphonies, as I will show in Chapter 4, reveal a considerable amount of tempo fluctuations. Thus Strauss does not seem to so easily fit either the "Classical" or the "Romantic" stylistic labels. This seeming contradiction is partially addressed by Raymond Holden in his discussion of Strauss's Mozart interpretations:

¹¹⁷ *The Phonograph Monthly Review*, November 1927, 71.

¹¹⁸ *The Phonograph Monthly Review*, April 1927, 317.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 320.

A technique that defined Strauss's Mozart symphonic style was his highly organized approach to tempo. When interpreting movements in sonata form, he clarified the architectonics of the structure by adjustments in tempos, coupled with suitable complementary dynamic, expression and articulation marks in his annotated scores. In his recordings of these movements, he often differentiated between the first and second subjects by slowing the speed at the arrival of the latter. This approach was not unique to Strauss, but unlike many of his contemporaries, he made his speeds part of a wider plan. In slow movements, he invariably performed the first and second subjects at the same speed but manipulated the bridge passage instead. When performing a minuet and trio, he defined the internal architecture by conducting the middle section at a slower tempo, and when creating a cohesive symphonic whole, he linked the tempi of the various movements. Central to Strauss's readings of Mozart's symphonies was the way in which he integrated tempos within the symphonic whole.¹²⁰

What this approach amounts to, Holden suggests, is a use of tempo modification that is imperceptible to the listener. In his Mozart performances, Strauss evidently did make use of rubato, but its deployment tended to be confined to formal section boundaries. It served to make the work's structure as clear as possible for the listener, while simultaneously creating an illusion that the conductor was performing the score exactly as written.

Arturo Toscanini

American press accounts of Toscanini mostly concern his opera performances, since conducting opera was his primary occupation in New York during the early twentieth century. New York critics from the early 1900s did not make note of Toscanini's strict tempo that would be so often discussed in posthumous commentary. If anything, they noted his subtle tempo fluctuations, portraying it as an element of the intensity he brought out from the orchestra. Reviewing a performance of Amilcare Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, one critic credited Toscanini with the production's success, stating: "Through all the performance was evident the energetic hand of Mr. Toscanini, who kept the blood of life pulsing through the orchestra." The reviewer

¹²⁰ Raymond Holden, *Richard Strauss: A Musical Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 54.

went on to note, in particular, that “a splendid rhythmic feeling, a magnificent building up of the melodramatic [sic] climaxes were especially notable features of his conducting.”¹²¹

A similarly laudatory review of Toscanini’s performances of *Götterdämmerung* and *Tristan und Isolde* takes notice of “the unceasing elucidation of every dramatic detail,” as well as “the building up of overwhelming climaxes.”¹²² With regards to Toscanini’s flexibility of tempo, the reviewer commented: “His tempos were free and subtly modified always; at certain points somewhat slow.” A predilection for slow tempi is not part of Toscanini’s posthumous reputation as a Wagnerian conductor, however. If the critic’s report is accurate, it suggests that Wagner performances were on average much faster in Toscanini’s time than they currently are.

In addition to the intensity achieved in Toscanini’s Wagner performances, his treatment of melodic passages also impressed critics. In the same review quoted above, the critic wrote: “Mr Toscanini never let the melodic strands escape him in all the complicated texture of the score, and the warm and potent expressiveness with which he brought out the essentially melodic character of this score was one of its most noteworthy features.”

When Toscanini began to conduct symphonic repertoire in the United States, these same qualities were again observed by the critics. For example, in his review of Toscanini’s first symphonic concert in New York with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 1913, Richard Aldrich singled out the conductor’s rendition of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, claiming:

In this Mr. Toscanini met in an unusual degree Wagner’s criterion of the “melos,” of keeping unbroken the essentially melodic line that underlies it. The orchestra sang throughout: and in all the nuances of his performance the melodic line was not interrupted; nor, in all the plastic shaping of phrase was the symmetry of the larger proportions or the organic unity of the whole lost sight of. It was rhythmically of extraordinary vitality. It was a conservative reading without exaggerations or excesses. There were subtle and significant modifications of tempo, but never of a disturbing sort.

¹²¹ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, January 1910, 92.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 95.

It was devoted to the exposition of Beethoven and not of Mr. Toscanini, and it rose to heights of eloquence without the intrusion of the conductor's personality.¹²³

These comments are insightful for multiple reasons. The first is the association of Toscanini with Wagner's conducting aesthetics, almost implying that Toscanini had conducted in a Romantic fashion. Yet while Aldrich makes note of Toscanini's tempo modifications, he ultimately classifies his reading as a conservative one, because he does not find Toscanini's rubato to be excessive. Furthermore, while critics such as Aldrich assessed Toscanini's approach as a Classical one, that is, free from the imposition of the conductor's own personality onto the music, somewhat paradoxically his readings were also presented as novel: as though the way Toscanini conducted Beethoven's works was somewhat atypical at the time.

This sense of novelty, of almost a revelation, comes across in a much later, 1932 review of one of Toscanini's symphonic concerts by Olin Downes. He writes that the conductor "causes not merely excitement, but wonder, when he takes a very familiar score and by his genius gives it the rapture and the beauty of the moment of creation. The listener is astonished. How could it be like that? Can it be exactly the same score that has done service so many years?"¹²⁴ Downes' elevated language almost implies that Toscanini could have been a conductor of the Romantic mold. Yet in the context of his recordings and other reviews, it is more likely that the excitement caused by Toscanini's conducting had more to do with his attention to detail, his emphasis of the melodic content, and his ability to bring out intensity in climatic sections. In other words, the qualities singled out for praise in Toscanini's performances are those of timbral balance and dynamics rather than the use of rubato. A confirmation of this may be found later in Downes's review where, commenting on Toscanini's reading of the *Fidelio* overture, he lauds "the superb

¹²³ Richard Aldrich, "Toscanini Conducts Symphony Concert," *The New York Times*, April 14, 1913, 9.

¹²⁴ Olin Downes, "Toscanini Creates Anew Familiar Masterpieces at His Philharmonic-Symphony Concert," *The New York Times*, October 28, 1932, 22.

crescendo of the first part, so admirably free of the acceleration which most conductors seem to think an inherent part of a crescendo in such a place.”

Assessments such as these align well with Toscanini’s stated aesthetic goals. The fact that the critics were both impressed by the excitement Toscanini’s performances generated, while commending him for a lack of exaggerated rubato, reflect the conductor’s own disdain for both overly Romantic conducting as well as interpretive pedantry. However, the remark implying that Toscanini’s tempi in Wagner were somewhat slow does slightly contradict his complaint, cited in Chapter 2, of the Germans always conducting too slowly.

Willem Mengelberg

Within the anglophone press, Mengelberg’s approach to conducting is best documented by the New York critics who chronicled his tenure with the New York Philharmonic. Their reports appear to be primarily complimentary, if not uniformly enthusiastic, praising Mengelberg’s nuanced interpretations and clarity of execution, both in terms of rhythmic sharpness and textural transparency. For example, in a review of Schumann’s *Fourth Symphony* programmed for his 1905 New York conducting debut, his performance was lauded for its “great freshness of spirit and rhythmic buoyancy [that] had elucidated all the underlying ideas of the work in the clearest fashion.”¹²⁵ Evaluating specific features of Mengelberg’s conducting style, the critic observed that “Mr. Mengelberg’s methods have nothing of the sensational.” He noted the conductor’s “firm and decisive” beat, then confessed to finding “something alluring in his straightforwardness and the directness of all his methods, and in the transparency of his conceptions.” Such a description seems to suggest that Mengelberg might have conducted in a more Classical manner, similar to Muck or Weingartner. However, later in the article the

¹²⁵ “Philharmonic Opens Its Concert Season,” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1905.

reviewer registers some reservations about Mengelberg's interpretation, wondering whether "there was, perhaps, more energy than poetic spirit" in the performance, and suggesting that "the treatment of certain phrases may have seemed sentimentalized by the retardation he introduced." The account seems somewhat self-contradictory: after positing that there was nothing sensational about Mengelberg's performances, the reviewer goes on to critique the arguably unnecessary ritardandos the conductor had added to the score.

In the early 1920s, Richard Aldrich made similar observations regarding Mengelberg's technically polished and overtly expressive performances. He wrote: "His reading of all these pieces had in the highest degree the qualities that are peculiarly his own; great finish of phrase, the clearest enunciation, great emphasis, great contrast." Aldrich particularly noted the "gemlike clearness" and "the lucidity and warmth of the string tone" in Mengelberg's performance of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne Suite*, and concluded his assessment thus: "There is never anything perfunctory about Mr. Mengelberg's reading. Nothing is slighted; every phrase is an event and is treated as such."¹²⁶ While the New York critics such as Aldrich do not describe Mengelberg as a Classical conductor, nor claim him to have the same self-effacing manner as Muck or Weingartner, they make no mention of the rather extreme tempo fluctuations Mengelberg displayed in his recordings. It is possible that Mengelberg only began introducing these features later on in his career. However, it is more likely that the New York critics were simply more accustomed to the Romantic styles of conducting, and less conservative than the Boston critics. Furthermore, when the New York critics do mention Mengelberg's use of rubato, they tend to do so in a somewhat cavalier tone.

Nonetheless, a vocal minority of observers did object to Mengelberg's interpretive indulgences. Critic Arthur Walter Kramer, for instance, left this scathing commentary on

¹²⁶ Richard Aldrich, *The New York Times*, February 10, 1922, 21.

Mengelberg's showmanship: "I cannot forgive him for constant 'emotionalizing' [sic] everything he did, from Corelli to the 'Salomé Dance' of Richard Strauss (in the latter piece, of course, it was not *exactly* out of place!!!)." ¹²⁷ Bruno Walter similarly objected to Mengelberg's interpretive liberties, taken in this case with Mahler's music. He reportedly complained:

With all his strong talent as a conductor, one could not say that [Mengelberg] strove to satisfy the intentions of the composer. I remember having found in Amsterdam, when I conducted Mahler's First Symphony [...] the printed score full of red corrections [in his] hand – all pointing to a tendency for exaggeration. ¹²⁸

Notably, Walter's admonishment of Mengelberg's "corrections" of Mahler's symphony perfectly illustrates Mengelberg's own reported desire to introduce "changements" into the written scores he would perform. Where the two conductors disagree is whether these changes reflect the composer's unstated intentions, something that Mengelberg claims and Walter refutes. Despite the divergence of opinions in the critical accounts of Mengelberg's conducting, his critics' views are not actually contradictory, even though it may seem that way at first glance.

As far as is Mengelberg's performances of Beethoven were concerned, Aldrich discussed the details of his interpretation of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* as follows:

Mr Mengelberg's idea of Beethoven's symphony was a strenuous one, full of high lights and deep shadows, of contrasts of tempo and dynamics. The first movement was taken at a vivacious pace; the funeral march seemed, especially toward the end, somewhat to drag. Mr. Mengelberg asked a good deal of the brasses, and they blew pretty loudly, sometimes too loudly for the beauty of tone, and this was especially true of the horns in the trio of the scherzo. But the performance made its effect with the audience, as such a performance can hardly fail of doing.

Accounts such as these confirm that Mengelberg was able to keep a steady pulse when he desired to do so. His crisp rhythmic articulations were certainly unusual for the time, since only Toscanini approached him in this regard. However, as my analyses in Chapter 4 will show,

¹²⁷ A. Walter Kramer, "A Word on Conductors," *The Chesterian, New Series*, June 1922, 240.

¹²⁸ Erik S. Ryding and Rebecca Pechefsky, *Bruno Walter: A World Elsewhere*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 404.

Mengelberg's recordings reveal significant and deliberate tempo fluctuations. Assuming these critics were already accustomed to extensive rubato in the Viennese classics – which they likely were – then it makes sense that they would take more notice of the immaculate ensemble precision Mengelberg achieved.

Conclusion

Critical accounts of live performances by some of the leading late nineteenth-century conductors, found in the anglophone press of the period, demonstrate that for the most part, these critics preferred technically disciplined renditions of the Classic repertoire, and therefore favored conductors who kept steady tempi throughout the work. Conversely, Romantic-styled conductors were typically regarded with suspicion, although New York critics showed more tolerance towards different performance aesthetics than their Boston colleagues, for example. Finally, these press accounts generally confirm that the conductors discussed above were successful in fulfilling their stated aesthetic goals. I will further comment on the language of these reports in the following chapter, where I will compare their descriptions with my own analyses of the same conductors' extant historical recordings.

Chapter 4

In this chapter, I analyze selected Beethoven recordings made by the conductors discussed in Chapter 3. After providing an overview of each conductor's recorded output, as well as a basic description of their stylistic tendencies, I offer in-depth analyses of their recordings of Beethoven's First, Fifth, and Seventh symphonies, as well as of the first movement of his *Eroica Symphony*. These analyses include tempo trajectories, as well as discussion of timbre, orchestral balance, ensemble precision, and other interpretive features not conveyed by the numerical data alone. Finally, I contextualize my analyses with the conductors' stated goals and their critical reception. The tempo trajectories, including the range of tempo fluctuation for each of the recorded movements, were measured using Sonic Visualiser, and are displayed in Appendix A.

Recording Output and General Observations

George Henschel

Henschel mostly made recordings as a baritone, particularly of Schubert's *Lieder*, for which he was most famous. His only orchestral recording is that of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1, made in 1927 with the Royal Philharmonic and released as part of a complete set of Beethoven's symphonies, in honor of the centenary of the composer's death. Henschel is the oldest conductor to have recorded a complete Beethoven symphony, and the fact that he lived long enough to make an electrical recording of it meant that the performance could be captured with greater fidelity. As a conductor, his priority seems to have been to bring out the work's metrical structure, as opposed to shaping its phrases through expressive timing. Most of his tempi are rather slow, and he tends to keep a steady pulse throughout each movement.

Artur Nikisch

Nikisch was one of the first noteworthy conductors to embrace recording technology, and he recorded sporadically between 1913 and 1921. Although these are acoustical recordings, and lack the fidelity of electrical recordings, they still capture many aspects of his performance practice. His recorded output includes Beethoven's Egmont Overture, overtures by Mozart, Berlioz, and Weber, as well as Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy* for orchestra. Besides his orchestral recordings, Nikisch is also featured as a piano accompanist on the recordings made by mezzo soprano Elena Gerhardt. The recording analyzed here is his 1913 performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 with the Berlin Philharmonic, one of the earliest complete recordings to be made of that symphony.¹²⁹

As evident from his extant orchestral recordings, Nikisch allows his musicians a great deal of rhythmic and expressive freedom, rather than controlling every one of their nuances. As a result, his recorded interpretations have a flavor of spontaneity. Nikisch modifies the tempo frequently throughout a movement to highlight the expressive qualities of the music – and perhaps also its narrative elements.

Karl Muck

The great majority of Muck's recordings are of Wagner's overtures and preludes. Perhaps his most notable recording includes the third act of *Parsifal*, which he recorded with the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra in 1928. He recorded the Finale of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1917. Unfortunately, the recording only preserves the first half of the movement: it survives on a set of discs that also includes short works by Berlioz, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky. The recording was most likely not released during Muck's lifetime,

¹²⁹ The first complete recording was made by Eduard Künneke in 1911 for the Odeon label. See Hepokoski "‘Listen and Be Amazed!’: Odeon, Künneke, and the First Recordings of Complete Symphonies," 118-119.

given his internment in the wake of the anti-German hysteria during World War I, which would also explain why the recording was never completed. In all his recordings, Muck keeps remarkably steady tempi, eschewing any outward sentimentality and tempo fluctuations unmarked in the score. The performances are often highly polished, with a great deal of commitment to rhythmic precision.

Max Fiedler

Fiedler's extant recordings mostly come from radio broadcasts which mainly consist of the Austro-Germanic classics, including Mozart, Schubert, and Brahms, as well as a highly dynamic performance of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*. His performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 analyzed here is his only complete recording of a Beethoven symphony. Made in 1936, towards the end of his career, it was recorded live with the Hamburg Radio Symphony Orchestra. From his recordings, Fiedler seems to favor transparent textures, and strives for clarity in ensemble balance, without allowing any one section to overpower the others. His tempo modifications are particularly pronounced, and often used to highlight the melodic content, as opposed to the metrical hierarchy of a work. Although Fiedler does not achieve the same rhythmic sharpness that Toscanini and Mengelberg obtain from their orchestras, his recordings demonstrate a fair degree of precision and uniformity in performance, at least within each individual section of the orchestra. Between the sections, however, there is an occasional lack of synchronicity.

Franz Schalk

Schalk's recording output is confined almost exclusively to the Viennese classics, including Beethoven's even-numbered symphonies and Schubert's Unfinished. Most of these

recordings, along with his performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 analyzed here, were made in 1928 with the Vienna Philharmonic. These recordings are somewhat paradoxical, in that although Schalk keeps a fairly strict pulse, the ensemble itself is often rhythmically unsteady. Like Henschel, Schalk tends to draw attention to a work's metrical structure over its melodic content. The lack of technical polish on these recordings, especially when compared to Toscanini and Mengelberg's efforts, make them all the more valuable historical witnesses, for they may provide insight into how orchestras may have sounded prior to the general adoption of modern technical standards.

Felix Weingartner

Weingartner is the oldest conductor to leave an extensive discography of electrical recordings. His recorded output features all nine of Beethoven's symphonies: he was the first conductor to have recorded the entire set. In addition to Beethoven, he also recorded all the symphonies of Brahms, as well as works by Mozart, Berlioz and Wagner. Weingartner's performances of Beethoven Symphony Nos. 1, 3, and 7 included here were all recorded with the Vienna Philharmonic in the 1930s, while his recording of the Fifth was made with the London Philharmonic in 1933. His recordings reveal something of a refined and elegant quality in his approach: an emphasis on subtle shades in dynamics and timbral balance to lend a work expression. He generally favors faster tempi, and tends to keep a steady pulse. The orchestral musicians are usually given some room for individual interpretations, although Weingartner allows them nowhere near the expressive freedom Nikisch permits his orchestra.

Richard Strauss

Apart from his own tone poems, Strauss recorded Mozart's last three symphonies, a few preludes by Wagner, and two symphonies of Beethoven, both with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra: Symphony No. 5 in 1928, and Symphony No. 7 in 1926. These are the recordings discussed below. Like Fiedler, Strauss favors clarity in both timbre and ensemble balance. While he does frequently modify the tempo, he does this to highlight the work's structure, rather than expression. Strauss is also one of the few conductors analyzed here to use different stylistic approaches for different composers. For example, his pulse within a phrase of a Beethoven symphony is often highly erratic. However, in the Mozart symphonies, his pulse is much steadier within the phrase, and tempo modifications only occur between phrases.

Arturo Toscanini

Like Fiedler's discography, most of Toscanini's comes from radio broadcasts, as he loathed the process of making gramophone records. His recorded output is nevertheless immense, and includes most of the standard repertoire from the common-practice era, ranging from Haydn and Mozart, to the modernist works from the early twentieth century. His recordings of Beethoven's Symphonies Nos. 1, 3, and 5 used here are all taken from his 1939 cycle, made with the NBC Symphony Orchestra. The exception, Symphony No. 7, comes from a 1936 radio broadcast with the New York Philharmonic. Much has already been written about Toscanini's conducting style, particularly by Christopher Dymont and Harvey Sachs, and need not be repeated here. I would only note the conductor's predominantly steady tempo, free from Romantic excess, yet often containing subtle pulse fluctuations within a phrase. Most of his recordings display a lyrical and dramatic intensity through the orchestra's precise treatment of rhythmic figures, as well as the sudden dynamic contrasts.

Willem Mengelberg

Like Weingartner and Toscanini, Mengelberg recorded all nine of Beethoven's symphonies. In addition, his recorded output predominantly contains late Romantic and early modernist works, including Brahms symphonies, a substantial amount of Tchaikovsky, as well as works by Wagner, Mahler, and Strauss. Mengelberg's recordings of Beethoven's Symphony Nos. 1, 5 and 7 analyzed here were each made with the Concertgebouw in the late 1930s. The exception is his recording of the Eroica, for which I chose to analyze an earlier recording, made with the New York Philharmonic in 1930. Mengelberg's recorded interpretations are notable for their attention to tone color, and their often extreme tempo fluctuations, even when compared to those of Nikisch and Fiedler. Like Toscanini's, these performances are distinguished by a remarkable rhythmic sharpness and uniformity in phrasing, where no action of the orchestral musicians is left to chance. Although Mengelberg's tempi are generally fast by modern standards, he usually resists the urge to accelerate within a phrase. Most tempo fluctuations on his recordings consist of abruptly slowing down, usually at cadences, and then returning to the starting tempo.

**Recordings of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1: Henschel, Weingartner, Toscanini,
Mengelberg**

Movement 1: Adagio molto – Allegro con brio

This early symphony by Beethoven follows the conventional, Classical-era structure pioneered by his teacher Joseph Haydn. The first movement is written in sonata form, with a slow introduction, an exposition with two contrasting themes, a development, recapitulation and

coda. My analyses focus on the Adagio introduction, and the beginning of the primary and secondary themes in the exposition.

In comparing the four recordings, one is immediately struck by the diversity in the conductors' approaches to the tempi, especially considering this is one of Beethoven's more Haydnesque works. Weingartner, Toscanini, and Mengelberg each make a clear distinction between the Adagio introduction and the Allegro section. Toscanini, however, avoids dragging the tempo in the opening, beginning about 10 BPM faster than Weingartner and Mengelberg. Not surprisingly to those familiar with Toscanini's performance style, he takes by far the fastest tempo through the rest of the movement, particularly in the primary theme – so much so that he slows down slightly as the exposition progresses.

By contrast, Henschel takes the fastest tempo in the Adagio introduction, yet the slowest tempo in the Allegro. Specifically, he begins the movement about 20 BPM faster than Weingartner and Mengelberg, and 10 BPM faster than Toscanini. This creates the impression that there is no tempo change marked in the score at all in this movement. Although Henschel's choice of tempi seem unorthodox, this does give the movement a structural unity, with its introduction and the following sonata form seamlessly connected.

Henschel, Weingartner, and Toscanini tend to not modify the tempo significantly in the Allegro section. Toscanini slows down slightly at the beginning of the secondary theme, whereas Henschel and Weingartner generally maintain the same tempo throughout. Mengelberg by contrast incorporates a few significant tempo modifications, each of which constitute a sudden and noticeable BPM shift. Perhaps the most remarkable is Mengelberg's sudden *rallentando* in the transition from the first to second theme in the exposition. There he slows down dramatically

on the last four quarter notes of the first theme (mm76-77), to begin the second theme at 60 BPM before gradually accelerating all the way up to 100 BPM.

Movement 2: Andante cantabile con moto

This movement is similarly structured in a sonata form, albeit without an introduction, and is not as expansive as the first movement. My analyses focus on the beginning of the primary theme, the climax of the development section, and the beginning of the recapitulation.

Among the four recordings, Mengelberg once again engages in the most extensive tempo modifications. In particular, his pulse in the opening theme is exceptionally flexible – to the point where a BPM count cannot accurately convey the rhythmic execution. This is partly due to the staccato articulation in the strings, which paradoxically results in a precise rhythmic treatment that is near impossible to quantitatively measure. Henschel, Weingartner, and Toscanini, on the other hand, maintain a steady pulse throughout this movement, although Weingartner's tempo becomes noticeably faster in the recapitulation.

Henschel offers an overall rather strait-laced interpretation of the *Andante*: his phrasing tends to be somewhat subdued, and his tempo varies little throughout the course of the movement. Surprisingly, however, he achieves an unusually expressive and dynamic performance from the orchestra in the development section, where the dynamic contrasts between the woodwinds and the strings, and the highly accented bowing in particular, result in a kind of *Sturm und Drang* quality, which none of the other conductors quite achieve to the same extent. In the recapitulation, Toscanini and Mengelberg both bring out new details in the phrasing, although their specific choices are markedly different. Toscanini interprets the returning main theme as a cantabile phrase, and has the orchestra play it similarly to how a lyric

soprano would sing the phrase. Mengelberg in turn strives for full transparency, placing great emphasis on the counterpoint.

Movement 3: Allegro molto e vivace – Trio

As Beethoven's score markings indicate, this lively movement is structured as a minuet and trio. I have focused my analyses on the main theme, and the start of the trio section.

At the start of the minuet, Henschel and Mengelberg both have the slowest average tempi. Unlike Henschel's steady pace, however, Mengelberg's tempo fluctuates significantly. For instance, he noticeably broadens the tempo in measures 8 and 9 in order to emphasize the upper neighbor that occurs on the strong beat. Weingartner and Toscanini both begin at a significantly faster tempo, although they differ in their approaches to the phrasing. While Toscanini achieves much more forward momentum by bringing out the accents from the lower strings, Weingartner does not aim for rhythmic exactitude, but rather a sense of fluidity in the strings. The result is that Weingartner's performance has a more relaxed quality, in spite of its faster tempo.

The four conductors offer a range of interpretive solutions to handle the transition from the minuet to the trio. Henschel decreases the tempo more than he normally would in an effort to highlight the start of the trio, whereas Mengelberg inserts a *Luftpause* to separate the sections. Weingartner and Toscanini, on the other hand, both aim for a seamless transition into the trio, and therefore neither of them modifies the tempo in any significant way.

Movement 4: Finale: Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

The finale's structure of a slow introduction and sonata form mirrors that of the first movement, with the contrapuntal writing in the *fugato* sections displaying Beethoven's humor

and wit. The focal points of my analyses include the tempi and phrasing in the slow introduction, the beginning of the primary theme, and the *fugato* section before the start of the recapitulation.

In the introduction, several peculiarities of the conductors' interpretations are worth noting. Henschel once again adopts an uncharacteristically fast tempo, compared to the relatively sedate speed in the succeeding Allegro section. By contrast, Mengelberg takes by far the slowest tempo in the introduction – so slow in fact that it is the sixteenth note, rather than the eighth, which conveys the beat. In addition, the pulse in his performance is quite erratic, yet the orchestra is perfectly synchronized, indicating that this section was most likely carefully rehearsed ahead of time. For the primary theme, Mengelberg and Toscanini again demonstrate contrasting styles in their phrasing. This time, Toscanini has the strings articulate the passagework, while it is Mengelberg who brings out an expressive, singing tone from the strings. Noteworthy as well is the deliberate use of vibrato on the sustained notes. Maintaining a relatively fast tempo and forward momentum throughout the entire symphony, Weingartner does not seem to fuss over minor details here. Rather, his reading conveys the overall sweep and form of the symphony, and perhaps channels Beethoven's youthful exuberance in this, his first symphonic work.

Recordings in Context

The recording of Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 made by George Henschel generally reflects both his own professed views on conducting and the press accounts of his performances. Although some of the language used by the Boston critics may suggest to modern readers that Henschel conducted in the Wagnerian fashion, it is highly unlikely that this was the case, as the steady tempi shown on this recording reveal. This aligns with Henschel's own declared disdain for the Romantic interpretations of Beethoven: as discussed above, he judged the changes

introduced by Wagnerian conductors as not in the spirit of the composer. In addition, Henschel's fast tempi in the Adagio introductions, together with the comparatively slow Allegro sections, may be indicative of the ways in which Henschel "individualized" Viennese Classical works, and "puzzled" the Boston critics, explaining the remarks to that effect made by Apthorp and Elson. Clearly, these critics did not object to any kind of Romantic rendering, but rather registered their confusion with respect to Henschel's overall tempo trajectory.

Weingartner, Toscanini, and Mengelberg all recorded the other symphonies analyzed here, so my discussion of how the press reviews might be reflected in their recordings of the First will be brief. Weingartner's performance of this symphony was described in a lengthy review quoted in the previous chapter as "a charmingly delicate and finished rendering."¹³⁰ As evident on the recording, he does not highlight or draw attention to any individual moments or sections. Rather, he focuses on maintaining the overall beauty of tone, the legato phrasing and the energetic execution conveying the youthful and Classical nature of the work.

In spite of their similarly steady tempi, Toscanini's recording reveals significantly more dramatic intensity and dynamic range than Weingartner's. This parallels the descriptions of Toscanini's early operatic performances in New York, where critics were particularly impressed by his energetic conducting that "kept the blood of life pulsing through the orchestra."¹³¹ By contrast, Mengelberg's recordings, both of this symphony and others, do not so obviously correspond to press accounts. Specifically, his critics praised the conductor for the clarity – or in their own words, "straightforwardness" – of his performances. While to a modern reader this may connote a Classical interpretation similar to his colleagues' recordings of the First, the blatantly obvious tempo modifications, in which Mengelberg indulges in his own rendition of the

¹³⁰ "In the Concert Room," *The Monthly Musical Record*, July 1, 1903, 133.

¹³¹ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, January 1910, 92.

symphony shatter such preconceptions. Nevertheless, his recording still displays transparent textures, firm rhythmic articulations, highly uniform phrasing, and consistent precision of execution, even given the abrupt tempo fluctuations in the first movement. These qualities may have inspired the critics' descriptions of his "straightforward" performance.

Recordings of Beethoven's Symphony No. 3: Weingartner, Toscanini, Mengelberg

Movement 1: Allegro con brio

For this movement, I have chosen to focus my analysis of the sound recordings on three moments that were most often featured in the hermeneutic writings on *Eroica* throughout the nineteenth century. Each contains unusual features that cannot be explained by the usual sonata procedures deployed in Haydn's, Mozart's, or even Beethoven's own earlier symphonies. In addition, each manifests a kind of symphonic "drama" that virtually requires direct interpretive involvement from the conductor, even a conductor who believes that the score must be performed "exactly as written." The first of these moments is the opening 45 measures of the movement, where, after the two declarative *tutti* tonic chords, the nondescript triadic motive introduced in the cellos gradually grows – harmonically, texturally, rhythmically, dynamically – into the sonata form's primary theme. The second moment is situated at the first climax in the development section. Here, a series of dissonant sforzando chords, played fortissimo by the entire ensemble and left unresolved is followed by a sudden dynamic and textural collapse that presages the arrival of the supposedly "new" theme in the oboes (see mm. 284). The final moment I address is the movement's coda, with its famously enigmatic opening, followed by the final iteration of the main theme, in its highest register yet, and now devoid of all conflict, alternating the tropes of a fanfare and a dance.

All three recorded performances analyzed here are of a similar duration, slightly under fifteen minutes, excluding the repeat of the exposition. As the two introductory chords immediately establish the tone of the movement, it is not surprising that each conductor phrases this opening in a distinct manner. Weingartner's performance is remarkable for the unique sonority he achieves in the opening chords by placing the woodwinds more in the foreground than usual. This creates a sense of nobility by allowing the woodwinds to reverberate, and eschewing a highly accented articulation. Like Weingartner, Toscanini allows the sonority of the chords to reverberate, although Toscanini has the rests between the chords lengthened slightly, before adopting a faster tempo in the succeeding measures. Whereas Weingartner begins the primary theme in a somewhat leisurely tempo, Toscanini immediately adopts a faster speed than that indicated by the timing of the opening chords. Mengelberg by contrast has these chords performed in exact time, immediately establishing the necessary drive for the movement. Nevertheless, his interpretation features the most rubato of the three recordings: for instance, he slows down dramatically (by about 5 BPM) to highlight the "problematic" C-sharp in measure 7. Also notable is an instance of reorchestration: the trumpets play an octave higher than notated, starting in measure 37.

For the culminating point in the development, starting in measure 248, Toscanini heightens the tension through extreme and sudden dynamic contrasts. In addition, his tempo accelerates as the dramatic tension increases, and then slows down to highlight the unresolved dissonant chords. Weingartner and Mengelberg, however, both keep a more consistent tempo throughout this passage, at least before the arrival of the new theme. Neither approaches Toscanini's level of harshness in the timbre, balance, and dynamics. Mengelberg indeed insists on a beautiful, singing tone from the strings accompanied by portamento, even for the jarring

sforzando chords, whereas Weingartner maintains timbral warmth by keeping the winds in the foreground, as he had done in the opening of the movement.

All three conductors modify the tempo to a certain extent in the final entrance of the main theme in the movement's coda. Toscanini slows down after the previous section, in order to enhance the impact of the final entry. Weingartner instead gradually speeds up over the course of the passage, then slows down slightly when a motive from the secondary theme area is reprised starting in measure 674. Meanwhile, Mengelberg keeps a strict tempo throughout the presentation of the primary theme, then slows down noticeably at the secondary theme's entry.

Recordings in Context

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Weingartner was particularly acclaimed for his handling of the “more rugged aspects” of Beethoven's orchestral works, with the further implication that the weightier odd-numbered symphonies appealed more to the conductor's artistic temperament than the even-numbered ones.¹³² Yet in his recording of the *Eroica*, Weingartner consistently maintains an elegant and refined rather than rugged interpretation, and its sonority would not be out of place in the composer's lighter works. How does one explain this discrepancy? I would suggest that nineteenth-century critics likely perceived such timbral qualities as ruggedness differently than we do, and perhaps expected a certain level of finesse and beauty of tone in any orchestral performance, regardless of the nature of the piece.

It is in this context that Toscanini's rendition of the *Eroica* must have astounded those same observers. Critical remarks praising Toscanini's “overwhelming climaxes” are illustrated particularly well on this recording, especially when compared to his colleagues' interpretations of the symphony. In addition, Toscanini's subtle use of rubato, referenced by multiple New York

¹³² “In the Concert Room,” *The Monthly Musical Record*, July 1, 1903, 133.

critics, is on full display in this recording, and is particularly noticeable in his treatment of the opening chords and in the final entrance of the main theme in the coda.

With respect to Mengelberg's recording, it would be useful to return to Aldrich's above-mentioned review for *The New York Times*.¹³³ Interestingly, Aldrich there described Mengelberg's tempo as vivacious: in reality, his pace here is about the same as Weingartner's and Toscanini's, with the contemporaneous recordings made by Henry Wood and Albert Coates showing even faster tempi. It is possible that Mengelberg's attention to the rhythmic execution may have led critics like Aldrich to perceive the conductor's tempi as having been faster than they actually were – a common enough result of such an approach. In addition, when Aldrich subtly alludes to Mengelberg's use of rubato, referring to it as “the contrasts of tempo,” his language implies that even the more extreme modifications used by the conductor may not have come entirely as a surprise to the New York critics. Lastly, Aldrich's remarks on the prominent use of brass are particularly apt in relation to the sections of the *Eroica* that Mengelberg has reorchestrated. It is worth noting that while Aldrich objected to the occasional sacrifice in the beauty of tone, which resulted from Mengelberg's scoring changes, he did not criticize the reorchestration per se. Indeed, he failed even to make a note of it in the review, indicating that the practice was too widespread to be worth mentioning.

Recordings of Beethoven Symphony No. 5: Nikisch, Fiedler, Schalk, Weingartner, Strauss, Toscanini, Mengelberg

Like the *Eroica*, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* was a frequent subject of journalistic “storytelling” throughout the nineteenth century. Instead of a Napoleonic subtitle, the enticement of the *Fifth* is its famous opening *motto*, surely one of the most recognizable passages in the

¹³³ Richard Aldrich, *The New York Times*, February 10, 1922, 21.

entire Western Classical canon. Famously claimed by Anton Schindler to represent “fate knocking at the door,” the *motto* unifies the four movements of the symphonic cycle into a coherent whole not previously encountered in symphonic writing. In the process, its successive reappearances in each movement lend the work a strongly narrative quality, consistently noted by its critics (from E.T.A Hoffmann onward), and surely by the conductors charged with its interpretation. In my recording analyses therefore I pay particular attention to the treatment of the *motto* in its various incarnations, starting with the first movement.

Movement 1: Allegro con brio

Structured in Beethoven’s typical four-sectional sonata form, the *Allegro* begins with the immediately repeated introduction of the *motto*, which will dominate the rest of the movement. My analysis focuses on the initial appearance of the *motto* and the following primary theme, the beginning of the secondary theme, and the final iteration of the *motto* in the coda.

The first issue to be addressed is arguably the thorniest, and the hardest to resolve using BPM measurements alone: how do these seven conductors interpret the opening five measures where the *motto* first appears, and the transition to the primary theme? Among the romantically minded of the group, there seems to be a consensus on including a lengthy pause after the repeat of the *motto*, while the “classicists” would allow only a slight pause, if any. Nikisch and Fiedler both hold their fermatas the longest: Nikisch for about four seconds each, and Fiedler as long as five seconds for the second fermata. The rest of the conductors hold each of the fermatas for about three seconds, except for Toscanini, who only holds them for two seconds. Likewise, the orchestras under Nikisch, Fiedler, Schalk, and Mengelberg each take about one second, or 60 BPM, to play the *motto*’s 3-note upbeat. Strauss and Weingartner are both slightly faster, at about 0.75 seconds, or 80 BPM, and Toscanini the fastest at 0.6 seconds, or 100 BPM. In fact, of

the seven conductors, Toscanini's interpretation of this passage, with its quick tempo and short fermatas, most closely resembles a present-day performance practice.

Schalk's recording proves difficult for quantitative analysis, due to the frequent lack of steadiness in his orchestra. This is especially true for the opening, where the musicians fail to come in together. I use the word "fail" judiciously here: in my opinion, this is not a matter of aesthetic choice, as it is for Nikisch, who gave his musicians a degree of interpretive freedom, but rather a case of genuine technical limitations in the ensemble. Although Schalk takes a relatively fast tempo in the secondary theme, the phrasing is somewhat stiff and rigid, almost as though he were less concerned with interpreting the music and more with keeping the musicians together at this speed. Weingartner and Toscanini also adopt a relatively fast tempo in this section, yet while Weingartner's remains steady, Toscanini employs a subtle rubato to achieve song-like phrasing. By contrast, Nikisch, Fiedler, Strauss, and Mengelberg all slow down considerably at the start of the secondary theme.

In the coda, each of the conductors holds the final fermata (mm.481-82) for roughly the same amount of time as at the opening of the movement. Fiedler proves to be the exception here: he holds the final fermata for about six seconds, undoubtedly the longest among the recordings analyzed here.

Movement 2: Andante con moto

This movement is loosely structured as a set of variations on two contrasting themes. My analysis focuses first on the first theme, scored somewhat unusually for the low strings. The "high drama" of the movement, however, occurs midway through the second theme that features a dramatic breakthrough modulation from A-flat major to C-major, the symphony's final tonal goal. As such a striking key change, in a section of the form where there should not be one,

surprised and intrigued critics and the concert-going public, my analysis also describes how each of the seven conductors handled this passage. Finally, I focus on the transition to and the final presentation of the first theme (starting from measure 180), where its character is transformed to embody the triumphant heroism of the second theme, as well as foreshadowing the victorious jubilation at the start of the finale.

The choices of tempo and dynamics are of particular interest in the conductors' interpretations of the first theme. Nikisch, for instance, slows down, in an almost imperceptible way, for the triplet figures in the codetta, in marked contrast to Toscanini and Weingartner, who perform the entire passage in strict time. Meanwhile, Fiedler's pulse here is constantly shifting, in an effort to better shape the phrasing and further highlight the structural qualities of the theme. Strauss's tempo also fluctuates, albeit not nearly to the same extent as Fiedler's: he limits himself to accelerating on the held chords in measures 7 and 9, adding also sudden dynamic shifts. Schalk's tempo, on the other hand, gradually slows down as the theme progresses, possibly to highlight its increasing tranquility over time. Mengelberg similarly slows down during the main portion of the theme, although unlike most of his colleagues, he speeds up again in the codetta.

To highlight the tonal breakthrough within the second theme, Nikisch slightly lengthens the preceding dissonant pivot chord before decelerating further toward the first cadence in the new key at measure 31; the notable lack of precision in the entrances lends a somewhat chaotic quality to the phrasing here. Fiedler instead achieves a similar intensity by having the orchestra suddenly rise to a fortissimo on the pivot chord, and unlike Nikisch's, his orchestra comes in exactly on the beat. While favoring more precision than Nikisch, Strauss similarly decelerates to the cadence at measure 31, before gradually increasing the tempo throughout the rest of the second theme's presentation. Weingartner, on the other hand, does not seem at all interested in

heightening the dramatic intensity of this passage, and instead keeps his orchestra relatively restrained in tempo, dynamics, and phrasing. Toscanini and Mengelberg, for their part, keep the tempo absolutely steady throughout, yet both emphasize the sudden dynamic contrast as the new key is revealed.

In transitioning toward the final variation, most conductors (Weingartner, Schalk, and Mengelberg in particular) maintain a relatively steady tempo between the transition and the beginning of the theme. Toscanini, somewhat surprisingly, slows down the tempo at the theme's entry quite suddenly by about 20 BPM, yet this tempo shift is hardly perceptible.

For the final climactic variation of the first theme, Nikisch gives decided prominence to the violins. On his recording, they maintain the highest dynamic level of all the orchestral sections, their bow speed and legato phrasing producing a tender and almost weeping quality. Fiedler, however, seems to have reorchestrated this section by adding trombones to support the melody in the strings. While one cannot know for sure his exact reasons for doing so, bringing the trombones in this early could perhaps be Fiedler's way of foreshadowing the heroic triumph of the finale in his scoring, just as Beethoven did in his tonal plan for the *Andante*.

Movement 3: Scherzo: Allegro

In place of a conventional minuet, the third movement of a Beethoven symphony (with the exception of the First) is a scherzo. As is typical, the structure of the scherzo in *The Fifth* is still that of the traditional minuet and trio – even leading E.T.A. Hoffmann to refer to it as a minuet in his famous review of the symphony – yet its character is marked by a return to the turbulence of the first movement. My analyses first focus on the foreboding and disquieting opening motif, marked *piano* and scored, like the opening of the *Andante*, for the celli and basses. I next discuss the recorded interpretations of the following theme, a stripped-down

variant of the symphony's *motto*, its single, repeating pitch beating the familiar triplet rhythm. Finally, I offer observations on how the conductors interpret the famous transitional passage (starting at measure 339) that links the scherzo to the triumphant opening of the finale. This unstable, highly dramatized moment presented Beethoven's composer successors with a powerful model of symphonic cyclicity, while supplying his critics with a vibrant, exciting musical "tragedy to triumph" narrative. The principal technical elements used here are the gradual expansion of the orchestral texture and dynamics, which I make a particular focus of my analyses.

One notable feature of the movement's opening is a *ritardando* that caps each of the two phrases of the introductory passage (mm7-8 and 17-18 respectively). As the *ritardando* is mandated by the score, the fact that a specific conductor honors Beethoven's marking does not in itself tell us much about his interpretive style and attitude towards tempo modifications. Indeed, all seven recordings feature the pronounced slowdown, on average at about 30 BPM. Fiedler's is slightly slower at 26 BPM, while Strauss's is faster, at 44 BPM. Strauss, however, begins the movement at a much fastest clip than his colleagues, at 100 BPM. Nikisch uniquely adds a pause on the last beat of measure 8, just after the fermata. This lends the opening an even more mysterious and foreboding quality, which is a hallmark of Nikisch's overall interpretive approach to *The Fifth*.

When the *motto* theme enters, Weingartner has his horns play it particularly loudly, more so than any of the other conductors. Schalk's orchestra conversely is much louder in the second phrase of the theme, while its opening is rather muted by comparison. It is possible that Schalk preferred to begin the section in a more subdued manner to allow himself "room to grow," so to

speak, but it does represent a notable departure from the score, where the soft dynamic is saved for the *motto* theme's return in the scherzo's reprise.

Mengelberg's treatment of the theme is notable for his use of reorchestration: like Fiedler in the *Andante*, he adds in the trombones, possibly to increase the menace of the sound. With respect to the theme's tempo, on the other hand, it is Nikisch's interpretation that proves particularly unusual: he accelerates more and more on each triplet, before slowing down towards the cadence. Every other conductor, including Fiedler, Strauss, and Toscanini, play the entire *motto* theme in a strict tempo, emphasizing its relentless quality.

Comparing the conductors' treatments of the transition to the finale, Schalk's stands out, due to its particularly brisk tempo. While Strauss records a similar BPM range here, his speed does not appear as fast, due to his generally faster pace throughout the movement. Schalk, on the other hand, appears to accelerate right into the section, so much so that the violins are audibly rushing. Strauss, Nikisch, and Fiedler all increase speed gradually, to complement the textural and dynamic expansion of the passage, with the Nikisch recording notable for his greater tempo fluctuations. By contrast, Mengelberg, Weingartner and Toscanini maintains a steady pulse throughout the section – in Mengelberg's case, until the final chord, which he (along with Fiedler) significantly lengthens, increasing the tension and delaying its resolution into the finale.

Movement 4: Finale: Allegro

Beyond its place within the symphonic narrative as a celebration of the hero's triumph over fate and in the tonal dramaturgy as the "victory" of C-major over C-minor, the finale is structured in a full sonata form, and its score distinguished by the delayed entry of the trombones, their first appearance in a score of any symphony. Although the trombones are featured throughout the movement, their sonority is prominent for the first time in the transition

theme, starting at m. 26. I therefore pay particular attention to the conductors' treatment of this novelty in my analyses. In addition, two other moments in the score are addressed. The first is the return of the *motto* theme of the scherzo in the retransition of the finale's development section (starting in measure 160), followed by the drive towards the recapitulation that parallels the transitional passage leading to the triumphant beginning of the finale. Finally, the coda, with its seemingly ceaseless affirmation of the tonic chord, presents interpretive issues for any conductor, less for hermeneutic reasons than due to the arguably awkward nature of the ending.

Among the conductors' treatment of the finale's opening, Fiedler's is notable for the unusual prominence given to the timpani, although it is possible that the acoustics and the microphone placement may have affected the ensemble balance. Another possibly unintentional effect on the same recording is an instance of melodic dislocation: that is, a lack of synchronization between the melody and the accompaniment. With respect to the tempo in this passage, the Nikisch and the Mengelberg recordings are worth highlighting. Nikisch, never shy in using expressive timing, slightly delays the start of the downbeats in measures 8 and 10, while Mengelberg slows down abruptly and dramatically, from 84 to 66 BPM, towards the end of the theme (mm21-22).

All seven conductors slow down, at least to some extent, at the beginning of the transition theme (m26ff) – perhaps to bring out the brilliant, bright sonority of the horns and trombones, or perhaps to accommodate the breath control needed to execute the passage. Even Schalk, despite his Classical temperament, slows down at the theme's entrance, following Nikisch, Fiedler, Strauss, and Mengelberg. Weingartner's and Toscanini's recordings show the least reduction in speed here; also, these two conductors are the only ones to keep a steady pulse throughout the theme.

Tempo – or more precisely, the extent of tempo modification – seems to be where the interpretations diverge in the treatment of the retransition. Weingartner in particular displays an unusually large degree of rubato throughout this section. He slightly lengthens the entry of the *motto* theme to emphasize its reappearance, then proceeds to accelerate gradually all the way through the beginning of the recapitulation. In its first measure, Weingartner broadens the tempo of the primary theme, interspacing its opening chords with pauses for extra emphasis, before speeding up again in the next bar. Somewhat surprisingly, Nikisch is the only other conductor to employ a similar degree of tempo modification in this section. Like Weingartner, Nikisch gradually increases the tempo as the *motto* theme progresses, then decelerates through the remainder of the retransition. The other five conductors employ rubato much more discreetly here, and keep a steady pulse throughout this section. Although Toscanini and Mengelberg both adopt a faster tempo right at the beginning of the thematic recall passage (as the meter changes), this fluctuation is not obvious to the listener. However, at measure 205, just before the reentry of the primary theme at the start of the recapitulation, Mengelberg, along with Fiedler, adds an unmarked *rallentando* to highlight this important sectional boundary.

There also appears to be a divergence of interpretations, even among the more Romantic conductors of the group, in the treatment of the coda, and specifically its final section, with its relentless repetition of the tonic chord. Nikisch, for instance, plays this passage with an *accelerando*, giving the symphony an energetic ending, while Fiedler, Mengelberg, and to a lesser extent Weingartner appear to revel in the monotony of the orchestral pounding by slowing down at this point. In addition, Weingartner and Mengelberg both extend the rest just before the finale's last tonic chord, increasing a sense of anticipation before the movement's closure. The

low end of the BPM ranges indicated on the table in Appendix A are due to this prolonged rest. Schalk, Strauss, and Toscanini, by contrast, employ no such rhetorical flourishes.

Recordings in Context

The accounts left by the conservative critics in Boston and London of Nikisch's conducting of *The Fifth* are mostly confirmed on his recording, indicating a consistency in his interpretation of this symphony. For example, Louis Elson criticized Nikisch for having held the fermata at the end of the opening *motto* too long.¹³⁴ His impression is supported by the recordings discussed above: with the exception of Fiedler, Nikisch holds the fermatas longer than any of the other conductors. Similarly, the interpretive liberties that Elson mentions and attributes to Wagner's influence are also fully apparent in Nikisch's recording, along with the individual freedom for the musicians that he cultivated, and that his critics bemoaned as declining technical standards. The only feature of his performance not apparent on the recording are the extreme dynamic ranges that Elson mentioned specifically in regards to his reading of *The Fifth*. It is possible, however, that the limitations of the acoustical recording technology, combined with the reduced orchestral forces Nikisch would have been forced to employ on his recording, did not allow for these dynamic contrasts to be fully captured.

Like Nikisch's recording of the symphony, Fiedler's similarly confirms critical accounts of his exaggerated tempo modifications. In particular, his reading of the opening of the *Andante*, with its constant, barely discernible BPM fluctuations, may be an example of what one of his critics termed "excessive modelling of the phrase."¹³⁵ In addition, Fiedler's prominent brass and timpani, to which his critics objected, are particularly notable throughout the finale. Unlike Nikisch, Fiedler maintains a high degree of orchestral precision, and achieves much more

¹³⁴ Louis C. Elson, *The Musical Herald*, December 1889, 286.

¹³⁵ *The New Music Review and Church Music Review*, December 1908, 8-9.

uniform playing throughout the work. This also aligns with his critics' opinions: they consistently praised Fiedler for his technical execution, and although some may have disagreed with his interpretations, he was never accused of lowering the Boston Symphony Orchestra's technical standards as Nikisch was during his tenure.

It is likely that Fiedler's "excessive modelling" may have stemmed from his close observation of Bülow's conducting, and represents the older maestro at his most indulgent. Interestingly, Strauss's very different interpretation of the Fifth symphony may reveal Bülow's influence, reflecting the pristine nature of Bülow's performances. While Strauss himself stated that he preferred a stricter tempo than Bülow, his recording of *The Fifth* includes considerable tempo fluctuations, a feature left unmentioned by his critics. However, as noted earlier, there are few critical accounts that document Strauss's conducting of the Viennese Classical repertoire. Those extant are reviews of his sound recordings, published much later than the critiques of Weingartner and Nikisch by critics likely much more accustomed to the objective and subjective conducting styles and primarily concerned with establishing benchmarks for the recordings of the standard orchestral repertoire. With that in mind, it is possible that while the overly pristine nature of Strauss's conducting may have been objectionable to these critics, his tempo fluctuations were not as immediately obvious to them as those used by Nikisch and Fiedler.

The relative scarcity of critical accounts on Schalk's conducting make comparisons of published reports to the evidence of his sound recordings similarly challenging. As noted in Chapter 3, most of his press reviews do not devote much attention to Schalk's conducting style, but rather briefly mention that he led an otherwise effective performance. We do know that his performances were overwhelmingly characterized as being Classically styled, and that he himself was self-effacing in his attitude towards conducting. In general, my analysis of his recording

supports these traits. Granted, Schalk does not maintain quite the same strictness of tempo as Weingartner and Toscanini achieve in their recordings. Nevertheless, tempo fluctuations evident on his recording of *The Fifth* likely represent minor technical lapses rather than any deliberate effort to shape interpretation by tempo modification.

There are several points worth making with respect to Weingartner's recording, particularly in the context of Kufferath's review discussed in Chapter 3.¹³⁶ As noted earlier, that critic was particularly impressed by the emotional power of Weingartner's performance of *The Fifth*. He reported his tempo as a fairly fast, "strongly marked allegro con brio," and his pulse as steady, but also noticed a slight slowing down on the approach to the secondary theme. Thus, Weingartner's subtle rubato, evident on his recording of the symphony, did not go unremarked by his contemporary critics, even those who would have heard more Romantic-styled renditions of *The Fifth*.

Even though the press accounts of Toscanini's performances of Beethoven's symphonies, including his rendition of *The Fifth*, describe them as Classically styled, his readings were still regarded by his critics as quite novel. Olin Downes in particular registers his surprise at Toscanini's interpretation of Beethoven, wondering how he could render a familiar score so differently from how it had previously been performed. I contend that these comments accurately reflect Toscanini's recording of the Fifth symphony analyzed here, which – despite its relative lack of tempo modifications and other Romantic flourishes – sounds markedly distinct from the other six recordings. This fact demonstrates that a novel and non-traditional interpretation of a classic orchestral work need not be a Romantic rendering in the Wagnerian mold.

Finally, one of the most noteworthy features of Mengelberg's recording of *The Fifth*, especially in the first movement, is his highly articulated instrumental phrasing, with the strings

¹³⁶ M. Kufferath, *Music: A Monthly Magazine*, May 1899, 94-95.

performing with a much more detached articulation, rather than in a typical legato of musicians born in the late nineteenth century. The result is an exceptional clarity of sound, where every note is heard – a feat not achieved by other Romantically styled conductors among those surveyed here, such as Nikisch or even Fiedler. Despite Mengelberg's extensive use of rubato, it is the clarity of his phrasing preserved in his recording of *The Fifth*, which proved to be the most noteworthy feature of his conducting style to his early twentieth-century critics as well.

Recordings of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7: Muck (4th mvt only), Weingartner, Strauss, Toscanini, Mengelberg

Unlike Beethoven's Third and Fifth symphonies, his Seventh, while equally popular with the public, did not inspire the same flurry of hermeneutic readings from its critics. As a result, my approach to selecting excerpts for analysis is more in line with that taken with the First symphony. That is, I focus on structurally important sections that constitute the formal and motivic foundation for each of the four movements.

Movement 1: Poco sostenuto – Vivace

Although structured in Beethoven's usual four-sectional sonata form, this movement is somewhat atypical due to an addition of an expansive introduction, itself a miniature (albeit truncated) sonata form, complete with two contrasting themes. Both these introductory themes have been included in my analyses, along with the primary theme of the exposition. In addition, I discuss the coda, with its prominent timpani and descending chromatic bass line.

Typically for his approach elsewhere, Toscanini's tempo is fairly consistent throughout the introduction. Most of the excitement he builds comes from the dynamic contrasts, instrumental balances, and the committed rhythmic execution from the musicians. Strauss

conducts at a more leisurely pace than is usual for him, although his tempi range more widely than Toscanini's – or Weingartner's. As for Mengelberg, apart from his typically great degree of tempo fluctuations, he places a special emphasis on the held chords in measures 11 and 13, injecting some anticipation before the introduction's first climactic moment. For that melodic buildup, the conductor particularly highlights the brass and the timpani.

As indicated in Appendix A, each conductor slows down to a certain extent at the start of the introduction's secondary theme, with Toscanini maintaining the most consistency of tempo throughout the entire section. Weingartner's rendition of the secondary theme is unique for his use of overdotting; otherwise, the four conductors show a remarkable degree of uniformity in their phrasing of the passage.

At the start of the exposition, Strauss's pulse is extremely erratic, with most of the primary theme being conducted at 110 BPM (just shy of his average 102 BPM for the section). Timbrally, he surprisingly foregrounds the violins, placing particular importance on their legato bowing and singing tone to counterbalance the melody in the woodwinds. Weingartner and Toscanini are steadier in their pulse, but both accelerate gradually as the theme progresses, with Mengelberg keeping a steady tempo and only proceeding to slow down in anticipation for the entrance of the entire ensemble.

In the lead-up to the coda, in order to build the necessary intensity, Mengelberg gradually accelerates the tempo, reaching as high as 130 BPM shortly before the section boundary. As the coda begins, however, he slows down the tempo dramatically, possibly to bring out the descending chromatic bass line. Strauss does the opposite: he abruptly adopts a faster tempo at the start of the coda, increasing it suddenly by about 20 BPM. Weingartner and Toscanini, by contrast, make no tempo changes in this section, whether gradual or unprepared.

Movement 2: Allegretto

Structured as an ingenious hybrid of a ternary form and a variation set, this movement proved the symphony's main attraction for its audiences, both at the premiere and in subsequent performances throughout the nineteenth century. My analysis of its recordings focuses predominantly on the first variation of its melancholy, chorale-like theme (measures 27-42), which follows its initial appearance in the lower strings, as well as its *tutti* variation 3, beginning in measure 75. I also briefly discuss the four conductors' treatments of the contrasting B section material, beginning at measure 101.

The tempo of the *Allegretto* was a contentious topic in the late nineteenth century, and to some degree continues to be so today. It is interesting to note that Weingartner, Strauss, and Toscanini all take a similar average tempo for this movement. Only Mengelberg is markedly slower, but even then not by much. Each conductor for the most part employs a steady tempo throughout variation 1, without any significant, large-scale fluctuations. Mengelberg and Strauss both use rhythmic articulations to give an impression of their pulse being not entirely even, yet the BPM measurements indicate that they both maintain a consistent baseline tempo.

Strauss's tempo stays mostly consistent from the beginning of the movement up to the climactic entry of variation 3 at measure 75. Weingartner and Toscanini both decrease the tempo suddenly (by about 10 BPM) at the start of that variation, while Mengelberg does the opposite, speeding up suddenly by about the same amount. As far as phrasing is concerned, Strauss places particular emphasis on the violins, heightening the melody's lyricism through legato bow strokes and deliberate use of vibrato. Mengelberg similarly emphasizes the violins, although with a noticeably larger orchestra at his disposal, he is able to achieve a much more voluminous sound. In addition, as is typical of this conductor, Mengelberg's strings engage in a synchronized use of

portamento, likely achieved by every string player within a respective section using the same fingering. By contrast, Toscanini creates an overwhelming intensity mainly through a controlled and gradual buildup of the dynamics.

In the contrasting B section, Weingartner maintains a firm pulse, and unlike Mengelberg, seems to resist the urge to turn this material into a funeral march. Toscanini and Strauss both employ subtle fluctuations throughout the section, although Strauss's rubato here is slightly more erratic than Toscanini's.

Movement 3: Presto

“It's like a load of yaks jumping about; what can one do with it?”

Sir Thomas Beecham

The third movement of the *Seventh* follows a modified scherzo-trio structure, with both sections appearing twice, followed by the final rendition of the scherzo and a coda. Below I attempt to answer Sir Thomas Beecham's question by focusing my analyses on the initial presentation of the main scherzo theme, as well as the first appearance of the trio, starting at measure 149.

While the tempi chosen by the four conductors for the scherzo theme are fairly similar, there is a slight divergence in their approach to phrasing. Toscanini and Mengelberg insist on a highly articulated playing, with the almost aggressive-sounding sforzandos at the onset of the movement. Mengelberg notably achieves this effect through the prominent use of the timpani, while Toscanini strives for a more nuanced tonal balance. By contrast, Weingartner and Strauss emphasize legato phrasing even at a fast tempo, and do not attempt the same rhythmic sharpness, which ironically allows them to achieve a more lighthearted tone, appropriate for a scherzo.

Unlike in the scherzo, the tempo choices in the trio section is where the four conductors' approaches diverge the most – particularly as Toscanini plays this section at nearly twice the clip of the other conductors. The fact that Strauss, Weingartner, and Mengelberg, whose styles are otherwise markedly different, all take a fairly slow tempo in the trio invites speculation that their common choice exemplifies the Austro-Germanic performance tradition, from which Toscanini was exempt. I should also note that the timbral balance in Strauss's rendition is distinct, due to the unusual prominence given to the woodwinds, although this could just be a consequence of the acoustic environment (e.g., microphone placement), in which his studio recording was made.

Movement 4: Allegro con brio

Wagner's reference to this movement as "the apotheosis of dance" is perhaps the most influential hermeneutic "reading" – if one can even call it that – of Beethoven's Seventh. The finale is in a four-sectional sonata form, and my analyses focus primarily on the two principal themes of its exposition. I also comment briefly on the retransition section of the development beginning in measure 198, with its quiet flourishes of the primary thematic material in the woodwinds.

Given the existence of Karl Muck's recording of the finale, I would like to begin by comparing his approach to that of the other four conductors. First, Muck's performance is unambiguously faster than the others. Specifically, while his maximum tempi are not much faster than Weingartner's, Muck maintains this rapid pace throughout. Second, Muck allows by far the least fluctuations in tempo throughout the section. Even Weingartner's recording features a slight accelerando before the entry of the transition theme, after which he settles back into a slower tempo. Strauss, meanwhile, begins the movement at the most leisurely pace of the five recordings. Rather than focusing on speed, he brings out the ascending and descending 16th-note

patterns in the strings, so that one can almost visualize the contour of the phrase groups. Once the transition theme begins, Strauss almost immediately increases the tempo, but then slows down again to 63 BPM at the cadence that precedes the entry of the secondary theme. By contrast, Muck, Weingartner, Toscanini, and even Mengelberg employ no significant tempo fluctuations throughout the primary theme area.

At the start of the retransition, Muck again proves a bit of an outlier by decreasing the tempo slightly (by about 10 BPM), whereas the other conductors keep the tempo more consistent with that achieved earlier in the development. Other than that, all five conductors are in alignment in maintaining the momentum throughout this section despite its softer dynamics.

Recordings in Context

Muck's recording of the finale of Beethoven's Seventh fully confirms the press accounts that overwhelmingly characterize him as a Classical conductor. Specifically, statements from the critics who claimed that Muck was not intent on uncovering anything new in the score are supported by the recording's strict tempo, its lack of rhetorical flourishes, and the polished and highly spirited orchestral playing throughout the movement. While his tempo is quite fast by modern standards, if it exemplifies his usual practice on the podium, the critics seem not to have objected to it in his Beethoven performances. This suggests that the tempo taken in this recording may not have been unprecedented in a late nineteenth-century performance practice.

Incidentally, Muck's recording casts further doubt on Toscanini's assertion, quoted in Chapter 2, that German conductors always played too slowly.

Weingartner's recording of the finale features slight tempo fluctuations, with the overall more flexible tempi than Muck's. This approach was evidently typical, as Weingartner's subtle rubato was noted by a critic who reviewed his performance of this exact movement for *The*

Musical Times in 1898.¹³⁷ Toscanini's and Mengelberg's interpretations also align with critical observations cited earlier about their approaches to Beethoven's other symphonies.

As for Strauss's recording, while it is known that his critics were divided as to its merit at the time of its release, few elaborated sufficiently on the stylistic issues that led to the controversy. I would argue that the disagreement was most likely caused by a perceived aloofness in the conductor's interpretation of *The Seventh*, since the critics never disputed the high technical standards displayed on this recording. Incidentally, Strauss most likely modeled his tempo modifications in this symphony after those of Bülow. For instance, the somewhat slower tempo Strauss takes at the start of the finale is a feature he himself noted in Bülow's reading of the movement, commenting: "He [Hans von Bülow] started the finale of the A major symphony like a peasants' dance with minor modifications."¹³⁸

Conclusion

From my analyses of the early recorded performances of Beethoven's symphonies in the present chapter, a few general trends emerge. First, there is indeed a clear distinction between the conductors who employ minimal rubato, and those who use tempo modifications as their primary mode of expression. This is not to say that all Romantically-inclined conductors employ rubato in an identical fashion. While Nikisch is more gradual in his fluctuations, presenting an impression of spontaneity, Fiedler, Strauss, and Mengelberg tend to modify the tempo much more abruptly. Likewise, the sections of the score where rubato is employed are highly idiosyncratic from one conductor to the next.

¹³⁷ *The Musical Times*, June 1, 1898, 389.

¹³⁸ Strauss, *Recollections and Reflections*, 50.

Unlike the use of rubato, these conductors' preferences with respect to ensemble precision appears to have little to do with any Classical vs. Romantic dichotomy. Toscanini and Mengelberg, for instance, are entirely at odds with respect to rubato, yet both demand a similar exactitude and synchronicity in phrasing and rhythmic execution. Meanwhile, Schalk, while striving to keep a steady pulse, does not insist that his musicians play exactly together all the time.

In addition, the recordings discussed in this chapter display a surprising consistency in their overall durations. Henschel and Strauss are both noticeable outliers, the former tending to take slower, and the latter significantly faster than average tempi in the Allegro movements. The rest of the group, however, all employ the tempi that are relatively fast by present-day standards. Even Toscanini, who has a posthumous reputation for taking fast tempi, is not so different in this respect from the other conductors born at around the same time. It appears that the trend of conducting Beethoven's symphonies more slowly seems only to have emerged with the generation of German conductors born in the 1880s, such as Klemperer, Furtwängler, and Hans Knappertsbusch.

Finally, in addition to giving us insight into the conductors' individual readings of Beethoven's symphonies and the performance practice trends that influenced their training and their interpretations, analyses of early recordings allow for a more thorough understanding of the language critics used to describe their performances. As noted above, without the evidence of these recordings, it would be all too easy for modern readers to gain a false impression of these conductors' stylistic choices based on the written accounts alone. By combining and comparing the written with the recorded sources, I have aimed to clarify such misconceptions, as well as address how these recorded interpretations would have been perceived by their contemporaries.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

In the present thesis, I have examined the recollections of nine orchestral conductors trained in late nineteenth-century practices, as well as critical accounts of their performances, particularly those of Beethoven's symphonies. I have then compared both groups' surviving comments on conducting aesthetics and interpretation with the evidence contained in the extant early sound recordings of that repertoire made by the same conductors, in order to gain a more complete understanding of late nineteenth-century performance practices and its relationship to the aesthetics of the period. Based on my analyses and the historical context provided, I am able to make the following claims.

First, throughout the late nineteenth century, a diversity of conducting styles co-existed. With respect to their interpretations of the Viennese Classics, particularly Beethoven, conductors of the period differed in their approaches to tempo, rubato, timbral balance, ensemble precision, as well as in their views on reorchestration. While diverse, each of their approaches is equally representative of late nineteenth-century conducting practice, as well as the Romantic-era performance practice more broadly. Both the written accounts and the recordings I have analyzed clearly demonstrate that there was no single agreed-upon way of performing Beethoven's symphonies.

Second, critical accounts that compare Classical vs. Romantic conducting aesthetics do not merely spout journalistic clichés or reveal subjective perceptions of individual reviewers. The stylistic differences they describe were real: they are preserved on early sound recordings, and can be directly measured and quantified. These differences are also specific, with the main issue being the presence and amount of tempo fluctuations: frequent and large-scale for the

conductors the press characterized as a Romantic, absent or minimal for their colleagues labeled as Classical.

Third, while the divide between theory and practice inevitably occurs among performing artists, the conductors discussed in this thesis generally aimed to put their aesthetic views into practice, albeit not always successfully. Discrepancies likewise exist between how these musicians viewed themselves and how their critics perceived their approaches and styles, with Felix Weingartner's being the most egregious case. That said, critical accounts for the most part confirm that the general aesthetic principles to which these musicians adhered guided their individual interpretations of the repertoire they performed.

Fourth, although conservative vs subjective interpretation of the standard repertoire was a contentious issue, it was far from the only consideration critics used in evaluating the merits of a conductor's work. It can be all too easy for modern readers to get the false impression that a specific performance was declared wanting because a critic objected to a conductor's overly indulgent or insufficient use of rubato. In reality, the critic may have judged that the performance lacked expression despite the conductor's use of tempo modifications, as in the case of Strauss, or was bewildered by the overall tempo choice, even if strictly kept, as in the case of Henschel. Such criticism had nothing to do with the Classical vs Romantic dichotomy but was rather an expression of a visceral impact of an individual conductor's performance.

To illustrate this point further, a Classical or a Romantic stylistic label only conveys roughly whether and how much rubato was used. It does not tell us about other, equally important aspects of an orchestral performance, such as tempo choices, dynamics, ensemble precision, timbral balance, rhythmic articulations, and the overall quality of technical execution. None of these features correlate with an objective vs. subjective interpretation: for instance, a

Romantic conductor might cultivate an extremely precise and pristine ensemble, where his Classical brethren would allow his musicians to take greater interpretive liberties. In addition, the ways in which Romantic conductors applied rubato varied considerably. Some were highly organized, structured, and almost pedantic in how they modified tempi, whereas others gave an impression of much more spontaneity – indeed, almost a rhapsodic treatment of a score.

Finally, although the Classical conducting style of Henschel, Muck, Weingartner, Schalk, and Toscanini bears some resemblance to the principles of modernist conducting that arose in the twentieth century, at the time these conductors performed and recorded, their approach was not perceived – by them or their critics – as modern, or as a rejection of past traditions. Rather, their conducting is better understood as a continuation of an older performance aesthetic, its roots going back to Felix Mendelssohn and Carl Czerny. Thus, while it is true that orchestral performances featured increasingly less rubato as the twentieth century progressed, this does not imply that a Beethoven symphony played without deliberate rubato necessarily exemplifies a modernist performance aesthetic. Plenty of conductors trained in the nineteenth century by their older colleagues employed little to no rubato when performing Viennese Classical works, while many critics perceived a Romantic interpretation of such pieces as a newer approach. While the Classically-minded soloists such as Joseph Joachim and Adelina Patti did employ plenty of unmarked rubati earlier in the nineteenth century, conductors evidently did not adopt this stylistic feature until much later. The reason for this may be the fact that baton conducting was a more recent art than solo and chamber performance. Its practical realities were also much different: until later in the nineteenth century, most orchestral works were performed after one or at most two rehearsals. As a result, tempo modifications in orchestral performances only became the norm once conductors began to insist on a longer rehearsal period.

In this study, I have aimed to inject more nuance into the current discourse surrounding the late nineteenth-century performance practice. Specifically, I have sought to challenge the prevailing historiography on the subject, which presents Romantically-styled interpretations as the norm throughout the nineteenth century. I have further argued that the interpretive issues surrounding orchestral performance of the period are much more complex than a neat Classical vs. Romantic dichotomy suggests. My overall goal has been to provide a more complete picture of the nature and evolution of orchestral performances of Beethoven in the decades following the composer's death, and their lasting impact on how we conceive of Viennese classical performances today.

Recommendations for Further Research

As I indicated earlier in this thesis, studies of historical recordings such as the one I have undertaken are still relatively few, and fewer still consider orchestral works. The first direction for further research I would suggest lies in the expansion of the repertoire under investigation. I have focused on the Viennese classical repertoire, and specifically Beethoven's odd-numbered symphonies, because these works held a supreme position in late nineteenth-century concert life, and it is there that the differences in the aesthetics and practice of orchestral performance most clearly reveal themselves. A broader study of these orchestral classics, as well as more modern Germanic repertoire is a logical next step. Furthermore, studies of the early recordings of non-Germanic orchestral works from the nineteenth century, such as those by French and Russian composers, have never been attempted and should prove particularly illuminating with respect to the performance-practice issues of the period.

In addition, in Chapter 4 I alluded to the voluminous corpus of nineteenth-century writings that attempt hermeneutic "readings" of Beethoven's symphonies, particularly the *Eroica*

and the *Fifth*. Scholarship on this type of criticism has demonstrated that both audiences and performers, including conductors of the period would have been thoroughly familiar with the hermeneutic writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Adolf Bernard Marx, Robert Schumann, Hector Berlioz, and later critics who had heard and described these symphonies as musical narratives comparable to literature and drama. Research that compares these writings with the evidence preserved on historical recordings might begin to address the question of whether, and to what extent, the critics' novelistic interpretations of Beethoven might have shaped the conductors' own readings of his works.

Finally, many of the conductors I have discussed plied their trade primarily not on a concert stage but in an orchestra pit of an opera house. Some spent the majority of their careers conducting opera. A fruitful avenue for further investigation might be research into how their conducting styles affected – and were affected by – the exigencies of operatic performance. A fully staged operatic production, which in addition to the orchestra and individual singers might involve the chorus and ballet, and often features elaborate sets, props, complex lighting, and stage machinery, make considerations of instrumental performance practices exceedingly complicated, whether or not it is shaped by the Classical vs. Romantic interpretive dichotomy. And while the performance practices of late-Romantic opera singers have been the subject of multiple studies (including those that involved historical recordings), orchestral conducting in the opera house is an area that still awaits investigation.

Last Words

Recording technology first emerged during, participated in, and preserved evidence of the monumental changes that were underway in European musical life at the turn of the twentieth century. Early recordings offer evidence of the modernist practices in both composition and

performance, while also documenting the last remaining attributes of the older performance traditions, familiar to the composers of the common-practice era. Within a relatively short temporal window, musicians trained in nineteenth-century practices recorded and in so doing preserved for posterity a style of playing, which was soon to die out. The conductors featured in this thesis held significantly closer and more tangible connections to Beethoven and other Viennese Classical composers than even the most imaginative musician or scholar alive today. As a result, their recordings are perhaps the closest aural evidence we have for understanding the performance conventions in place during Beethoven's lifetime, and in the decades thereafter. In the words of Richard Taruskin, "recordings are the hardest evidence of performance practice imaginable. If we truly wanted to perform historically, we would begin by imitating early-twentieth-century recordings of late-nineteenth-century music and extrapolate back from there."¹³⁹ By analyzing early recordings of Beethoven's symphonies, I hope to have contributed to a more vivid understanding of how such performances would have sounded, while challenging musicians and readers to reconsider their own perceptions of the "correct" ways of conducting Classicism.

¹³⁹ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 168.

Appendix A

The tables below contain the tempo measurements of the recorded excerpts analyzed in Chapter 4. Listed by conductor and placement within a score, the numbers include the average BPM (beats per minute) as well as the BPM range for each excerpt. I determined the tempo trajectories by using the open-source software Sonic Visualiser.

Beethoven Symphony No. 1

Adagio molto – Allegro con brio

	mm4-12	mm13-52	mm77-88
George Henschel	92, 74-108	92, 79-105	87, 78-96
Felix Weingartner	70, 50-90	106, 92-120	102, 94-110
Arturo Toscanini	83, 68-98	120, 104-136	102, 94-110
Willem Mengelberg	72, 56-88	104, 80-125	80, 60-100

Andante cantabile con moto

	mm1-25	mm65-93	mm112-126
George Henschel	92, 78-106	87, 74-100	90, 80-100
Felix Weingartner	94, 82-106	94, 82-106	110, 100-120
Arturo Toscanini	95, 80-110	94, 78-110	96, 88-105
Willem Mengelberg	89, 72-106	98, 80-116	94, 82-106

Minuet: Allegro molto e vivace – Trio

	mm1-25	mm79-103
George Henschel	102, 90-114	91, 82-100
Felix Weingartner	117, 104-130	100, 90-110
Arturo Toscanini	113, 100-125	110, 100-120
Willem Mengelberg	102, 84-120	99, 88-110

Finale: Adagio – Allegro molto e vivace

	mm1-5	mm6-30	mm116-160
George Henschel	70, 60-80	70, 64-76	66, 60-72
Felix Weingartner	55, 46-63	79, 72-86	80, 74-86
Arturo Toscanini	69, 54-84	84, 76-92	82, 70-94
Willem Mengelberg	29, 20-38	78, 72-84	79, 70-88

Beethoven Symphony No. 3*Allegro con brio*

	mm1-45	mm248-299	mm655 to end
Felix Weingartner	52, 44-60	48, 44-52	53, 48-57
Arturo Toscanini	51, 46-55	49, 44-54	53, 47-59
Willem Mengelberg	49, 40-58	43, 42-54	53, 47-59

Beethoven Symphony No. 5*Allegro con brio*

	mm6-21	mm64-94	mm440-482
Artur Nikisch	78, 65-90	80, 65-94	91, 80-102
Max Fiedler	80, 72-88	85, 74-96	96, 84-108
Felix Weingartner	89, 80-98	90, 78-102	101, 95-106
Franz Schalk	94, 84-104	86, 76-96	99, 88-110
Richard Strauss	104, 88-120	97, 80-114	112, 100-124
Arturo Toscanini	93, 86-100	91, 78-104	105, 90-120
Willem Mengelberg	90, 80-100	87, 78-95	97, 82-112

Andante con moto

	mm1-22	mm28-32	mm180-195
Artur Nikisch	69, 54-84	74, 62-86	80, 68-92
Max Fiedler	57, 44-70	63, 50-76	71, 56-85
Felix Weingartner	76, 63-88	79, 66-92	83, 69-96
Franz Schalk	72, 55-88	79, 67-90	96, 82-110
Richard Strauss	77, 60-94	78, 63-92	90, 72-108
Arturo Toscanini	75, 60-90	82, 74-90	85, 70-100
Willem Mengelberg	70, 48-92	84, 69-98	87, 70-104

Scherzo: Allegro

	mm1-18	mm19-97	mm339-373
Artur Nikisch	65, 54-76	78, 60-96	77, 64-90
Max Fiedler	65, 51-78	71, 44-97	76, 62-86
Felix Weingartner	70, 50-90	86, 72-100	75, 66-84
Franz Schalk	75, 66-84	78, 60-96	94, 80-108
Richard Strauss	90, 80-100	97, 80-114	102, 84-120
Arturo Toscanini	81, 69-92	89, 66-112	94, 80-108
Willem Mengelberg	60, 48-72	74, 44-104	82, 72-92

Finale: Allegro

	mm1-26	mm26-43	mm160-206	mm404-444
Artur Nikisch	75, 66-84	74, 56-92	86, 76-96	96, 76-116
Max Fiedler	85, 69-100	78, 56-100	86, 76-96	88, 60-116
Felix Weingartner	85, 69-100	79, 69-88	87, 69-104	81, 53-108
Franz Schalk	79, 66-92	79, 69-88	93, 80-106	96, 76-116
Richard Strauss	85, 69-100	81, 66-96	98, 80-116	101, 72-130
Arturo Toscanini	78, 63-92	81, 69-92	90, 72-108	109, 92-126
Willem Mengelberg	87, 66-108	84, 72-96	76, 44-108	89, 51-126

Beethoven Symphony No. 7*Poco sostenuto - Vivace*

	mm10-22	mm22-28	mm67-110	mm423 to end
Felix Weingartner	76, 63-88	63, 54-72	88, 72-104	103, 88-118
Richard Strauss	70, 51-88	65, 54-76	102, 76-128	119, 104-134
Arturo Toscanini	64, 54-74	57, 48-66	98, 80-116	112, 96-128
Willem Mengelberg	61, 48-74	59, 48-69	89, 63-114	104, 84-124

Allegretto

	mm27-42	mm75-100	mm101-116
Felix Weingartner	63, 56-69	63, 54-72	74, 63-84
Richard Strauss	66, 63-69	67, 61-72	64, 51-76
Arturo Toscanini	60, 54-66	64, 56-72	68, 56-80
Willem Mengelberg	55, 48-61	62, 51-72	53, 40-66

Presto

	mm1-24	mm149-180
Felix Weingartner	119, 104-134	50, 40-60
Richard Strauss	119, 104-134	48, 40-56
Arturo Toscanini	124, 108-140	88, 72-104
Willem Mengelberg	124, 108-140	45, 36-54

Allegro con brio

	mm5-12	mm20-62	mm198-219
Karl Muck	82, 76-88	82, 76-88	77, 66-88
Felix Weingartner	73, 66-80	77, 66-88	77, 66-88
Richard Strauss	68, 63-72	76, 63-88	68, 60-76
Arturo Toscanini	73, 69-76	75, 66-84	76, 66-86
Willem Mengelberg	70, 63-76	73, 66-80	73, 66-80

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