

'Time Travelling'

Towards an Appreciation of Bach in the style of Joachim

Becoming a 'Pupil' of Joachim

Following on from my first substantial publication, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003), which was based on my doctoral studies at the University of Sheffield with Colin Lawson and later Clive Brown, I was the recipient of an AHRC Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts, hosted the University of Leeds, 2006-9. A selection of the outputs from this project – entitled *String Chamber Music of the Classical German School, 1840-1900: A Scholarly Investigation Through Reconstructive Performance* – can be found on my own website [here](#). This archive includes some twenty period-instrument recordings that represent various stages of stylistic experimentation.

As the project pages show, my aim was to try to embody – in my own performing style – as much as possible of what I called a 'classical' German school of violin playing. I pursued this via intensive, exclusive study of certain violin treatises – becoming, as it were, a posthumous pupil of Joachim et al. The focus was upon a Leipzig-based approach to performance style and aesthetic, inspired by musicians associated with Felix Mendelssohn. Whilst reducing this to 'an approach' or a single 'style' is undoubtedly contestable, there is substantial evidence to suggest a connecting philosophy surrounding a number of traditionally-minded German-based/trained performers and composers, many of whom had direct connections with Mendelssohn.

In violin-playing terms, as my 2003 text sought to investigate, there was something of a fault line that opened up around the middle of the nineteenth century between players trained in Paris and Brussels (often described as a 'Franco-Belgian' school), and an Austro-German outlook. What is clear is that, in perception at least, there was a divergence following on from a more common root. This is often ascribed to the setting up of the Paris 'school' at the turn of the nineteenth century, originating in the popularity, teaching, technique and stylistic outlook of the three authors of the 1802 Paris *Méthode de violon*, Kreutzer, Baillot, and Rode. By the end of the nineteenth century Joseph Joachim and his pupil Andreas Moser were writing disparagingly of the Franco-Belgian school, seeing it as the source of all stylistic abuse (see, for example, the famous passage in their *Violinschule*, Volume III, p.32). Much of this antipathy, quite possibly garnered from nationalistic bias and isolationism (something that might strike the modern reader as rather unfamiliar, even abhorrent), related to a perception that this Franco-Belgian school had lost its root connection with the Italian originators of the violin, which those of the Germanic strain claimed as their heritage. Joachim and Moser were broadcasting a distaste for empty sentimentalism: 'Mayerbeerish' tendencies equated with Henri Vieuxtemps' approach (Joachim & Moser, III, 33) and the tendency for this to manifest itself in

intellectually-questionable tonal sensuousness. Crucial to this issue for Joachim and Moser was the approach to two violinistic traits of style that continue to this day to spark quite fierce discussion and debate:

'And so it could come about that when inner feeling failed, or as the result of bad habits was unable to express itself, a performer, in order not to appear uninteresting, would substitute for natural expression in *cantilene* that flickering tone produced by means of an unbearable *vibrato*, which, along with a generally misapplied *portamento*, is the most deadly enemy of all good playing.' (Joachim & Moser, III, 34.)

The conservative-minded German school was epitomised throughout the nineteenth century by three violinists, connected by pedagogic genealogy, who, quite apart from discernible individual tendencies, created something of a conservative orthodoxy: Louis Spohr (1784-1859), Ferdinand David (1810-1873), and Joseph Joachim (1831-1907). This style of playing – if it can be reduced to a single concept – was the crux of what I was trying to put into practice during my AHRC project at Leeds University. The survival of recordings by Joachim (from 1903) enormously enhance the viability of this, problematic as these primitive documents no doubt are.

There is, indeed, much interest once again in such an approach. The recently launched AHRC-funded project '[Transforming Nineteenth-Century Historically Informed Performance](#)' at the University of Oxford rehearses, in its promotional literature, the now-conventional thesis that there is something of a gap (or 'chasm', to use Clive Brown's term) between what scholars have investigated and what performers have been enacting. Part of the problem, to quote from their 'Rationale' statement is that 'not enough research has been practice-led' and maybe that relatively few have attempted to act upon these understandings of historical style. Ten years earlier, I made my own humble moves towards obviating this in my AHRC-funded project. This provides the background to my approach here in the B Minor Partita: what happens if we try to emulate how we think Joachim approached Bach's music?

Emulating Joachim: Practicalities

If this is the overall aim – intention to emulate Joachim's stylistic and aesthetic approach – we need to be sure as to 'which Joachim' we are seeking to 'be'. We also need to navigate the troubled philosophical waters of what it means to stand in the shoes of a great player – of the past, or even the present. When I undertook the [AHRC project](#) described above, my aim was to concentrate on style and, put simply, how I think Joachim's playing sounded. I sought to embody a style gained from understanding the aesthetic approach that Joachim took to the principal areas of enquiry explored in my 2003 text: that is, Phrasing, Tempo, Rhythm, and the aurally-conspicuous effects of Vibrato and Portamento. What I did not investigate in any great depth was fundamentally *how* Joachim played the violin. Much work has been done by Clive Brown on physical aspects of violin playing in the nineteenth century; as an [article](#) of his on the Leeds University [CHASE project](#) website shows, he is a convinced advocate of this, citing (in his own experience) significant physiological advantages. His

would appear to be a relatively lone voice, however, which is perhaps curious given that research and practice in 'baroque' playing has indeed delved into such matters, and many baroque specialists practice known physical traits of the period.

My approach has always been to integrate historical stylistic and sonic understanding with my own basic technique and posture. One can temporarily adopt postural attributes in order to appraise their tonal and practical effects, but the same aural outcome may be ultimately be achieved without perpetuating the physical struggle! This may seem an empirically flawed approach to some, but for me this has always been a pragmatic decision. As George Kennaway has observed in respect of cello technique (and, for example, the so-called 'violin hold' of the left hand advocated by Romberg), such practices are hard for the modern player to adopt convincingly. Besides this, better understanding of human physiology has perhaps allowed us to see the pitfalls of such practices. Like many musicians in, say, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment – the subjects related to Claire Holden's AHRC Oxford study – I am also called upon to play in a modern environment, which means a wide variety of musical styles and the necessity for the reliability demanded by twenty-first century concert expectations (not to mention recordings!). Practically, one cannot easily keep switching back and forth between differing fundamental physical approaches to the instrument. But this does not necessarily make my endeavour impossible, unrealistic, or half-hearted, as I hope to demonstrate a little later.

Bringing Period Style into Play

Arguably, the most interesting aspects of historical practices – particularly when they relates to familiar, canonic repertoire – are their resultant traits of style; the ideas behind the performative actions; the adjustment to musical means and ends. All of these aspects can shape present-day players' approaches to performance. Whether this gets us any closer to ideals of 'what a composer intended' is perhaps challengeable, but at least such a positive engagement with the past (something that the aforementioned AHRC Oxford project purportedly pursues) is a way of seeing research exert a tangible and important impact on the wider world of performance. Indeed, corroboration of this – philosophically at least – might come from Joachim and Moser, who suggest:

'The aim of all truly good teaching has ever been to lead the pupil towards artistic independence... In training him in the fundamentals of musical grammar and in all the technical means for the interpretation of musical works, only such influence should be brought to bear on him as will refine his taste, increase his musical sense, and direct his temperament into well regulated paths.' (Joachim & Moser, III, 34)

Copying directly any other musician – physically, stylistically, or in any other way – might be a useful tool to learning (and it is by copying that most of us learn, initially at least). But even in the environment of a highly authoritarian mode of education, such as was practiced by Joachim at the Berlin Hochschule (a matter – in respect of bowing physiology – which was heavily criticised as a weakness of the 'Joachim method' according to Carl Flesch, as he writes in his Autobiography, pp.33-

6), there is room for not only necessary variation, but also an ideal of individualism, at least up to a stylistically-regulated point.

But – to return to my question – which Joachim are we seeking to emulate?

Joachim the Undisputed Master?

The image created around the violinist by his followers and admirers paints a vivid picture of scholarly conservatism, care, learning and seriousness, and is further enshrined (according to the fashions of the time) in the many photographs of him in later life. This is encapsulated by Moser's biography of his former teacher, which proposes a highly idealised persona. A famous description of this kind by Johann Rühlmann from his article 'Die Kunst des Violinspiels' in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1865 (when Joachim was in his prime) shows this well:

'An energetic of a high artistic ideal is Joseph Joachim (1831), who with iron consistency, unmoved by the streams of external virtuosity, concentrates only on the realisation of his true artistic principles. [...] He precisely modifies his style of performance to suit the historical period in which the work he is to perform belongs...Joachim seems to lend a sense of consecration to all these works, so that one can decisively say: he plays the composer...with spirituality, to the comprehension and clear understanding of the listener. Such an artist must prove fruitful for his own times and for the future for he embodies the means to higher artistic ends.' (Rühlmann, 1865, Vol. iii, p.701)

This image – the scholarly performer, the solid and dependable artist delivering wholesome, grounded music that is 'healthy' and maybe even 'virile' – is an image further enforced by the tone and nature of the three-volume *Violinschule* which Joachim wrote with Moser between 1902 and 1905. Of course, the authorial voice and the 'expert' status is typical of such volumes, and the modern reader is struck immediately by the unshakable certainty of the opinions therein – a sign of the assumed deference towards the 'great' in this period. What is striking, however, is the lengths to which Joachim and Moser (who wrote with apparent agreement and as part of a particular school of artistic thought) go to justify their opinions by reference to the past. They create – perhaps in contradiction of the wayward 'French' who have lost their connection with history and 'healthy' playing – an image of dependable historical foundation. In the opening pages to Volume II, this image encompasses an appreciation (relevant when we consider the music of Bach) of past modes of performing practice, with extensive discussion of baroque ornamentation. This might strike the uninitiated as rather surprising, given the manufacturing in the twentieth century of the conceit that HIP – in the modern sense – seeks a return to values sidelined by romanticism and its 'mainstream' inheritance, and maybe even the idea that scholarly knowledge of the eighteenth century and before is a relatively recent 'discovery'.

Joachim's position as a possible architect of modern notions concerning the relative status/purpose of composers/performers is revealed by some of his earlier remarks. Of 'editors', he writes in a way that, superficially, sounds rather like many current views:

'The modern practice, therefore, of "editing" recognised classical and standard works cannot be too severely condemned as a Vandalism. It has actually come about that the carefully considered intentions of the composer have been superseded by the platitudes of their so-called "editors".' (Joachim & Moser, III, 10)

Certainly, this view seems more familiar than that of Carl Flesch in his posthumously published autobiography, in which he opined (in the 1930s) concerning Joachim's own editorial contributions:

'At times he left far too many fingerings and bowings to discretion, as in the case of the Corelli and Beethoven sonatas, which are hardly distinguishable from the original text.' (Flesch, 36)

Yet, it is important not only to note that Joachim's attitude (and practice) was, naturally, seeing the past through the thick prism of romanticism (just as ours is via modernism, of course!), but also to see that Joachim's argument here is quite carefully constructed and nuanced. Joachim, above, alludes to classical and 'standard' works. But:

'A somewhat different standpoint must be taken when considering the compositions of times prior to Viotti, because the intentions of composers were not always so clearly indicated then as we today might wish them to be.' (Joachim & Moser, III, 10)

Joachim, apparently a self-styled arbiter of this cultural tradition, thus intercedes for us with a lengthy historical justification of his aesthetic judgements. Nonetheless, his approach is not one of historicism in an immediately recognisable sense otherwise, even if the philosophical underpinnings are more similar to the present time than one might suppose. After weaving a logical argument encouraging musicians to follow the score where it is specific and where it has been rendered by composers he sees as fully aware of the violin's capabilities, he extends this to a number of others including Bach and Handel who...

'...although not actually virtuosi, yet understood the peculiarities of our instrument so far, that what they wrote for it was both playable and in keeping with its character.' (Joachim & Moser, III, 11)

Nonetheless, he remarks that in respect of Tartini's music there was 'not so much variety of light and shade' as had subsequently been 'developed'. Indeed, he took an apparently pragmatic view of 'modernising' performance style:

'...if we reflect how the compass of the violin in the direction of higher register was extended by Nardini, Tartini's most celebrated pupil, – to say nothing of the extravagances of Locatelli – we must certainly admit the view that the compositions of Tartini and of even older musicians will well bear a treatment in the manner of expression which, while in no way spoiling the uniformity of their style, will correspond more to the sentiment of the present day, than if performed with a timid anxiety to be literally correct.' (Joachim & Moser, III, 11)

This reasoned, rational, scholarly, and responsible performer, ardently defending violinistic civilisation against the hordes of (French!) barbarians, is but one image of Joachim – one that aligns with the typical 'monumental' portrayal of his friend and colleague, Johannes Brahms. Another, though, is of Joachim in old age, and as transmitted to us by less reverent commentators than Andreas Moser.

Joachim Past His Prime?

Carl Flesch's autobiography is a rich – if somewhat untrustworthy – vein of information on a large number of figures with whom he had contact. As with so much of Flesch's outputs, it is not unreasonable to suspect a somewhat self-serving and even self-congratulatory tone to many of his opinions. But the fact remains that his writing purports, on the surface at least, to give a dispassionate view of a number of figures, including Joachim himself. Born in 1873, Flesch did not of course observe Joachim in his prime, and regarding Joachim in old age his remarks are perhaps realistic. Flesch praised the 'inner life' of Joachim's performances, as well as the 'imaginative freedom which marked his interpretations despite all due obedience to the written text' (Flesch, 30), which seems to align plausibly with the 'learned' image created earlier. However, he also writes:

'In his last years, I sometimes heard him play out of tune, drily, and with a shaky technique. Owing to the absence of any kind of vibrato, his tone had assumed a somewhat senile character, and his fingers had become gouty and stiff...Nonetheless one could not but be deeply impressed by his genius for shaping his phrases, by the somnambulistic certainty of his intuitions which always seemed to find the only true violinistic expression for the inner significance of the music. Unjustly, he used to be known as a 'classical' violinist in the slightly suspicious sense which the adjective had acquired in the course of time...In actual fact, he was a romantic through and through, uninhibited, even somewhat gipsy-like by nature, and he always retained these traits which, indeed, can still be heard in his Violin Concerto 'in the Hungarian Style' op. 11.' (Flesch, 30-31)

Joachim's fiercest critic, significantly earlier in the late 1880s, was of course George Bernard Shaw, whose discussion of Joachim's Bach playing – of obvious relevance here – was as humorous as it was biting critical. Joachim, yet another giant of the musical establishment, is ruthlessly cut down to size:

'He played Bach's Sonata in C at the Bach Choir Concert in St James' Hall on Tuesday. Joachim scraped away frantically, making a sound after which an attempt to grate a nutmeg on a boot sole would have been as the strain of the Eolian harp. The notes which were musical enough to have any discernible pitch at all were mostly out of tune. It was horrible – damnable! Had he been an unknown player, introducing an unknown composer, he would not have escaped with his life!' (Shaw, 318)

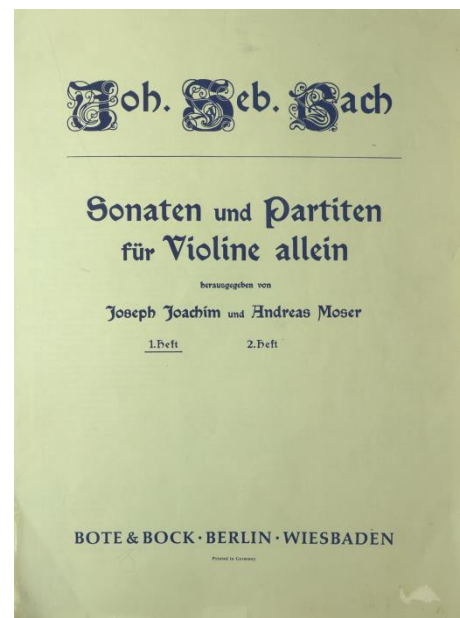
To intend, in a project such as my own, to emulate this kind of performance vision would be, even by my own standards, rather eccentric! Yet, of course, Joachim's 1903 recordings – some fourteen years after Shaw's comment – are all the hard evidence we have of his performances. Nonetheless, and when the stylistic unfamiliarity (and primitive record quality) are taken into consideration, they do reveal quite vividly the musical outlook of their author. There is, of course, a strong argument that this

is still by far the best information that we have about how he actually played. Much time has been spent by a number of scholars – me included – listening to, analysing, and measuring the five short works he recorded, which include the Prelude from BWV 1001 and the Bourrée from BWV 1002. Joachim's volatility of tempo in the Prelude is illustrated on p.251 of my 2003 text, which measures inter-onset beat values. This fluctuation of speed is actually less pronounced than that of Viennese violinist Arnold Rosé (1863-1946) – often superficially compared to Joachim – which perhaps proves a general theorem expounded in my text in a number of contexts: that Joachim's playing was remarkable for its parity with the theoretical advice he and Moser proposed in their *Violinschule*. Joachim's playing is characterised by great virility of tone – discernible in spite of the dimness of the recording. His use of both portamento and vibrato is quite sparing, although his slides are still characteristically frequent and pronounced by modern standards, and indeed far more evident (especially in his own Romanze in C) than Carl Flesch would have us believe.

Joachim's Bach Edition

It is worth talking a little of the 1908 edition of the Sonatas and Partitas, bearing Joachim's name and published in Leipzig a year after his death. This edition, in many ways, epitomises Joachim's artistic outlook. Following on from the edition of 1843 by Ferdinand David, Joachim also provides a double stave, the upper a performer's realisation of the score (with some bowings and fingerings mapping onto a stylistic concept), the lower purportedly Bach's original. Unlike the David edition, Joachim's makes reference to the famous autograph score. In the preface, Moser writes:

'By a happy chance it happened that two years ago (1906) Joachim had seen a copy in Bach's writing of the Sonatas and Partitas. This manuscript, the property of the widow of the late 'Thomascantor' Professor Dr Wilhelm Rust of Leipzig, and at present in the care of Herr Dr Erich Prieger of Bonn, had remained hitherto practically unknown. In order that we might establish the original text, Herr Dr. Prieger was good enough to place the photographic reproduction of the manuscript at our disposal. We were thus in a position to produce an **entirely independent work which is not based on any previous edition.**' [Moser's emphasis].



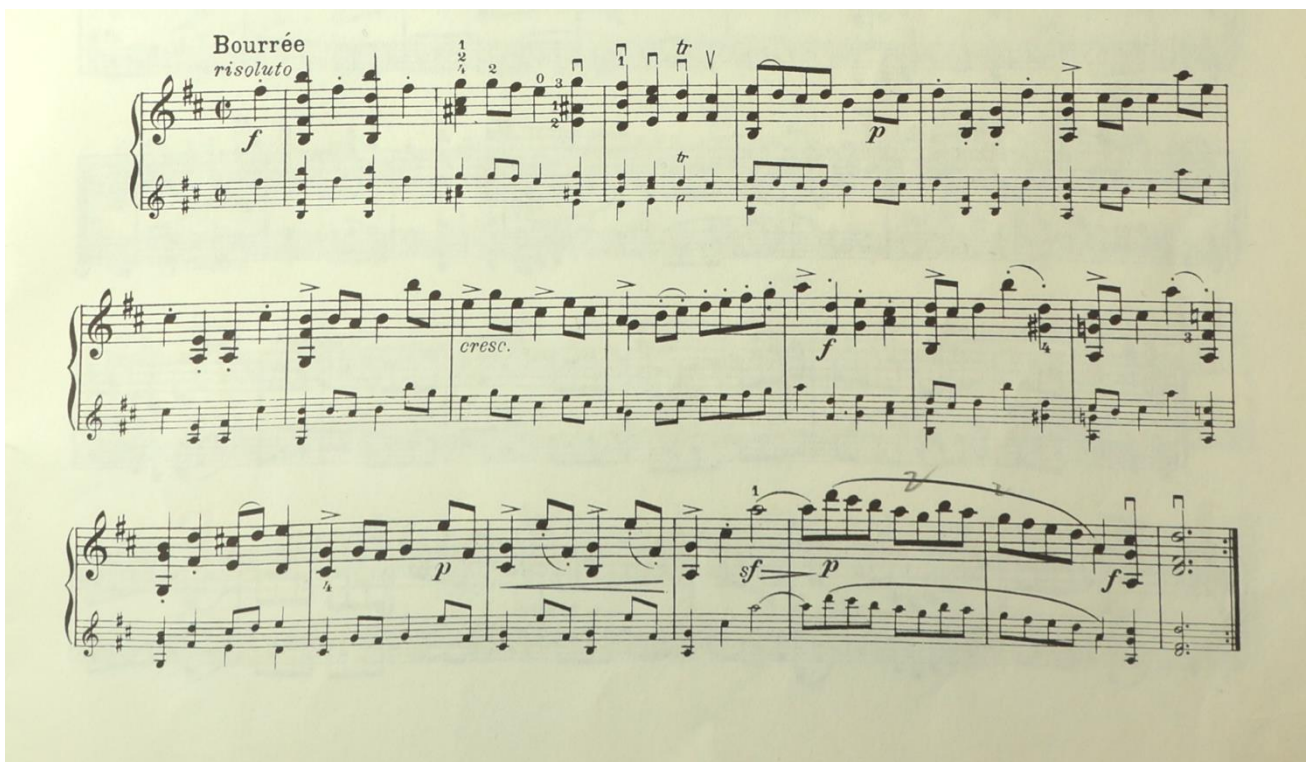
Moser's introduction, which deals with editorial changes and their justifications, as well as hints (in accordance with the disposition of this school of playing) regarding realisation and performance style, corroborates Joachim's consciousness of a continuing tradition. A remarkably prescient editorial standpoint, considering claims made much later in the twentieth century by 'early music' performers – claims that long-lost past traditions could be regained only by bypassing the vandalism of classical and

romantic editions. Any intimation of a historically slovenly and theoretically suspect style of 'romantic' performance is thus misplaced here.

Emulating Joachim's Bach: How Much is Possible?

In my own recording of the B Minor Partita, then, my intention was to reproduce traits of Joachim's style as an exercise of artistic emulation. For the greatest chance of tonal parity, I used (varnished) gut strings of appropriate thickness. I have attempted to approximate Joachim's approach to rhythmic freedom: usually small-scale alterations, and often involving (as in all of his recorded performances) changes to rhythmic values. I copy, insofar as I hear it, his strength of sound and character, and some measure of his approach to tonal colouration.

Utilising similar methodology to that in my [Leeds AHRC Fellowship](#), the obvious starting point was to attempt a 'copy' of the technically challenging Bourrée (with its very awkward multiple stops!) which Joachim himself recorded in 1903.



BWV1002: Bourrée. From Joachim's edition, published 1908.

Deep aural familiarity with the 1903 recording was my guide in a performance that perhaps reflects what Nicholas Cook described to me in conversation in 2006 as the 'tribute band' approach. Unlike (for example) an Elvis Presley impersonator, though, my aim here was not to seek absolute parity of personality, sound and delivery, but rather to imagine myself as a disciple of this tradition and this performer – playing, as it were, within a similar sound world and artistic understanding.

Since my 2006-9 'total immersion' study of late nineteenth-century violin technique I have returned to performing works from the full historical span of repertoire. Thus, as a frequent user of modern metal strings, I was struck immediately by how difficult it is to realise this music cleanly and accurately on gut. The difference of thickness between the D and A strings makes fifths especially difficult to realise (one tends to 'spread' the strings with the weight of the finger, causing intonation errors). The hygroscopic nature of the natural material, even in varnished form, means that the strings behave notably differently every day and in every circumstance. On the day that I made the test recording the room was hot and the atmosphere a little humid, meaning that I was on my guard for fear of the strings 'whistling'. Stout pressure on gut strings which are at lower tension than modern ones can result very easily in distortion, and the powerful chords of the Bourrée can easily knock the strings out of tune. This is made worse in my case by being equipped by nature with rather hot hands with a tendency to perspire!

All of these factors, when put in the context of the twenty-first century and its hunger for absolute tonal perfection at all times, make for a challenging prospect. One wonders, given the very slow response time of a thick gut string in comparison to a modern one: to what extent are certain audible traits of style in recordings of the early twentieth century as much a consequence of organological inconvenience as anything else? To put this more accurately: is one naturally disposed towards certain stylistic effects (and, commensurately, less concerned with others) as a result of organological phenomena? Agogic accentuation, and the need – like rapid cornering in a motor car – to go 'slow in, fast out' in respect of bow-strokes, might well be encouraged by such factors. The languid portamento may well indeed be not so much a matter of aesthetic preference, but rather what Flesch lampooned as 'taking the portamento bus' as the cheapest and most convenient way of getting from one position to another. This last hypothesis may apply especially when the very intonation of the strings as well as their slightly unpredictable and sometimes rough surface make clean shifting more perilous. Equally, the need to soften the steel E-string with vibrato, or avoiding it by high position work on the A string, are both avoided by using the sweeter and warmer gut E. These are not necessarily intended as scholarly observations, but they are practical ones, and ones that may well raise important issues all-too-infrequently referred to in consideration of how we use 'period instruments'.

BWV 1002: Bourrée – Test Recording, June 2016

Technical specification:

- A spaced pair of Sontronics Sigmas, paired with Focusrite ISA 428 MKII preamplifiers.
- A centrally positioned SE-Neve RNR1, paired with a Neve 1073 preamplifier.
- A Universal Audio Apollo firewire interface to take the audio into the digital domain, with the project capture set to 96 KHz recording at 32-bit.

Let's begin by listening to my realisation of this movement, in a style inspired by Joachim:

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

'Modern' version

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Bourrée (Tempo di borea), **David Milsom, 2016**

Now let's hear Joachim's 1903 performance (in a modern digital transfer):

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

Acoustic recording (horn to wax cylinder)

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Bourrée (Tempo di borea), **Joseph Joachim, 1903**

It immediately becomes evident, of course, that there are very substantial sonic differences in the recorded sound. Discussion of this topic has motivated some present-day performers to undertake experiments in capturing sound via papier mâché horns and wax cylinders, the results of which take us some way towards close emulation of a long-deceased violinist. My collaborator, James Bacon sought out a method of 'reverse engineering', however. Having established, via an acute ear trained over a couple of decades, what could reasonably be assumed to be missing from Joachim's live sound in the acoustic capture and playback processes, James employed various digital audio tools to effect the necessary changes. In other words, we set about ruining a modern recording of exceptionally high fidelity to turn it into something approximating Joachim's [see '[Technical Notes](#)'].

Here now is my emulation after James' digital manipulations:

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

'Distressed' version

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Bourrée (Tempo di borea), **David Milsom, June 2016**

Finally, here is a short excerpt of my performance, in which the 'historicising' effects are fully implemented at the start, but gradually faded out to reveal my clean recording:

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

'Time travelling' version

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Bourrée (Tempo di borea), **David Milsom, June 2016**

This was a quick and informal experiment. What we aimed to do, simply, was to replicate the kind of sound we perceive today when we hear a playback (via a modern transfer to digital sound) of a Joachim disc. A technical explanation is offered in James' accompanying Technical Notes (see [here](#)). Further work in future will involve a more thorough study of the parameters of Joachim's recordings

from a technical perspective. Recreating the actual conditions of Joachim's recordings (and others from this period) is an obvious step for further research, but beyond the limits of what we were investigating here. Rather, our aim was to create for the modern listener a sonic experience more akin to hearing Joachim's own discs in order to provide better comparison of my performance to his.

The method might be likened to 'weathering' of buildings, machinery, etc when captured on film, in order to create a more credible evocation of the past. One might consider, as well, the famous case of a digital keyboard, for the sake of verisimilitude, replicating the noise of the jacks resetting on a harpsichord – a sound that harpsichord makers struggled to eliminate! Apart from the philosophically intriguing concept of deliberately recreating that which arose accidentally – of artistically importing that which was not a desired feature – the analogy here goes some way towards describing the process and motivation behind our little experiment. The key thing is to discover whether my performance can indeed sound to all intents and purposes like Joachim's.

Implications

The deeper implications of this will form part of my ongoing research in other contexts. Suffice it to say at this stage that these experiments here might help link my playing – stylistically – even further with Joachim's. Ordinarily, this is not easily achieved. My playing generally sounds a lot unlike our perception of Joachim's! This may well reflect the limitations of my technical approach to the problem: I am trying to replicate and understand Joachim's stylistic decisions and aesthetic outlook, not each and every peculiarity of his own technique and sound production. That would require un-learning and re-learning even more of the mechanics of how I play the violin – an experiment willingly entered into by Clive Brown (see for example his article [here](#)) but beyond the practical scope of a player who needs to be versatile in a modern context.

On the other hand, it could be that my emulation of Joachim is in fact close to his real sound. Those who listen to my experiments in recreating his approach, as attempted in my [2006-9 AHRC project](#) are unlikely to be entirely convinced because the sound-world of early recordings is so very different. In attenuating and distressing a modern recording, though, the listener is able perhaps to make more helpful comparisons with the historical artefacts themselves. In the absence of a means of credibly 'modernising' a historical recording (one cannot 'put back' sonic parameters that were not there in the first place), this is surely a piece of investigative methodology that has scope.

To carry the process of 'assimilation' and 'emulation' a step further, then, we might move on to a test recording of the BWV 1002 Allemande in both 'clean' and 'distressed' versions. Empirical musicologists may find this somewhat unscientific, but it is intended as a listening experience by which the auditor is invited to imagine how a recording of this movement by Joachim in 1903 might have sounded.



BWV 1002: Bourrée. From Joachim's edition, published 1908.

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

'Modern' version

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Allemande, **David Milsom, June 2016**

[click here](#) or play track from <http://www.bachviolinproject.com/discussion.html>

'Distressed' version

J.S. Bach, Partita in B Minor, BWV1002 – Allemande, **David Milsom, June 2016**

As a creative departure to inspire future work, I hope you will share with me a sense of enthusiasm for seeing Bach's music in this way as a means of paying homage to one of this repertoire's most important historical interpreters.

David Milsom, Huddersfield, June 2016

www.davidmilsom.com

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