



String Chamber Music of the Classical German School, 1840-1900: A Scholarly Investigation through Reconstructive Performance

MARIE SOLDAT-ROEGER (1863-1955): HER SIGNIFICANCE TO THE STUDY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY PERFORMING PRACTICES

David Milsom, June 2007 (revised May 2015)

Whilst the life and times of the Austrian violinist Marie Soldat-Roeger (1863-1955) has received scholarly scrutiny in recent years, relatively little mention has been made of the recordings she made for Odeon c.1920.¹ James Creighton re-issued these acoustic discs in an LP transfer in the 1980s,² and Pavilion Records re-released her performance of the slow movement of Spohr's 9th violin concerto as part of their CD compilations in the 1990s.³ Until recently, however, the significance of these recordings to students of late nineteenth-century violin playing has been undervalued. It is perhaps a sign of the increasing depth and sophistication of knowledge in performing practice of this period that the recorded testimony of such lesser-known musicians is now being examined to corroborate established critiques of recordings by players such as Joseph Joachim, Leopold Auer and others who represent the earliest born players to survive into the recording age.

As with so many aspects of historical reception, the role of past critiques is an important one in this process, which, in the case of Soldat-Roeger, may explain why her playing is not more generally known. James Creighton belittled her playing in his sleeve notes, remarking:

'There is a simplicity of style and a rather cool purity about her playing that appears to exclude any trace of individualism. The tonal nuances are few...yet the total result, with the mannerisms of the time fully stated is very pleasing to the ear.'⁴

Tully Potter suggests a similar denigration of these discs, remarking in his article in *The Strad* magazine in 1996:

'Soldat-Roeger's only records were made in c.1920 for the Union label, when she was in retirement and past her prime. Inevitably, in spite of the reassuring presence of the well-known Viennese accompanist Otto Schulhof, she sounds a little inhibited on some of the 78 rpm discs. One can imagine this dignified middle-aged lady being somewhat fazed by her first experience of having to play into the acoustic recording horn

¹ Odeon matrix numbers: Union A: 3000/1, 3002/3, 3006/8, 3012/3, 3009, 3004, 3005. The date of these recordings are a little uncertain. Tully Potter (BVA1 *The Recorded Violin* sleeve notes) places the date as c.1920, whilst the MUGI website biography (see footnote 12, below) places the date as 1926. They are obviously made by the acoustic process, however.

² Discopaedia, *Masters of the Bow* catalogue no. MB1019.

³ *The Recorded Violin* Volume 1, Pavilion Records, catalogue no. BVA1.

⁴ James Creighton, sleeve notes to MB1019.

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while standing stock still – any excessive movement would affect the volume of sound. Nevertheless, the records convey the loftiness and nobility of her musical intentions, even if they do not suggest the power she must have produced in her heyday. The Adagio from Spohr's 9th Concerto is not only the most convincing performance but is particularly valuable historically because she studied this concerto with a pupil of the composer.⁵

Reasonable as these remarks may be (and it is in any case a matter universally acknowledged that the acoustic process in particular created difficulties for performers that limit the verisimilitude of the results), they did, of course, affect other musicians as well. Joachim himself was seventy-two years of age when he registered his performances in 1903 and was equally open to the charge of being past his best by this time. Whilst such factors do indeed circumscribe remarks about his playing on these discs, impelling particular caution from analysts too ready to take his recordings at face value, it has not prevented them being some of the most well-known and frequently-studied performances.

In Soldat-Roeger's case, there has been a relatively long history of such less-than-favourable comment. Her entry in the third edition of Grove's dictionary (ed. William Cobbett) is similarly parsimonious, suggesting that she 'had a following among those who admire solid before brilliant acquirements',⁶ whilst Michael Musgrave's detailed examination of her is not immune from uncritical advocacy of this view, Musgrave speculating that she may have lacked Joachim's 'creative fantasy'.⁷

It is entirely natural from today's perspective that Soldat-Roeger's playing might lead to such assumptions. The unschooled ear may indeed find most acoustic performances worthy of such criticisms, given the fact that the process was too limited to convey much of the tonal quality of a player's performance, and it is only by frequent comparison of 'like with like' that any qualitative judgements can be made. The study of recordings is now an established scholarly activity, however, and it is appropriate that her playing receives a more sympathetic hearing today. Robert Philip, in many ways the progenitor of the study of recordings, remarked in 2004 upon the change in attitude to Joachim's performances:

'Thirty years ago, a recording of Joachim playing a Brahms Hungarian Dance, if played to an audience, used to make them laugh. It was a completely unfamiliar and, from the perspective of the 1970s, ludicrous manner of playing, and it was impossible to imagine that this was the great violinist for whom Brahms wrote his Violin Concerto. Now his recordings are the subject of

⁵ Tully Potter, 'Brahms' Understudy – Brahms' protégé: the violinist Marie Soldat-Roeger', *Strad*, Volume 107 (December 1996), 1320.

⁶ William Cobbett, 'Soldat, Marie', in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (3rd edition, ed. W. Cobbett, London, 1928), Volume 4, 800. The use of the past tense here is revealing for a violinist who was to live a further 27 years.

⁷ Michael Musgrave, 'Marie Soldat 1863 –1955: An English Perspective', in Reinmar Emans and Mattias Wendt (eds), *Berträge zur Geschichte des Konzerts Festschrift Siegfried Kross zum 60. Geburtstag*, (Gund Schröder, Bonn, 1990), 326.

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academic study and if they are played to a group of students they tend to elicit respectful silence.⁸

Much of this change of attitude comes from increasing familiarity and, indeed, acceptance that what one hears is not quaintly and irrelevantly 'old-fashioned' but respectably (and indeed fascinatingly) 'historical'. At the same time, the *New Grove* 'Performing Practice' article reflected the changing climate. Whilst the 1980 edition failed to predict the surge in interest in nineteenth-century performing practices and applied most of its remarks to the discipline for music before 1750, the second edition (2001) defined Early Music as 'a term...now commonly used to denote any music for which a historically appropriate style of performance must be reconstructed.'⁹ This is a symbolic reflection of the increasingly fertile ground of studying past performing practices, whether chronologically distant or relatively recent.

From the perspective of the student of nineteenth-century violin playing, Soldat-Roeger is a highly significant figure. After study in Graz with Eduard Pleiner, leader of the Graz Opera orchestra (under whose direction she made her debut with Vieuxtemps' *Fantasie-Caprice* Op. 11 at a Steier Musical Union concert), she took instruction from Augustus Pott, who had been a pupil of Louis Spohr. In 1879 she was heard by Joachim who offered her a place at the Berlin *Hochschule für Musik*, from which she graduated in 1882 with the Mendelssohn prize. She had a further three years of tuition by Joachim himself. In addition to giving the Viennese premiere of Brahms' Concerto on March 8th 1885, she formed a string quartet in Berlin in 1887 (with Agnes Tshetchalin, Gabrielle Roy and Lucy Campbell), and on March 1st 1888 made her London debut at a Bach Choir concert at St. James' Hall, playing the Brahms concerto under the direction of C.V. Stanford. Soldat-Roeger continued to be associated very directly with the Brahms-Joachim tradition: she was one of the three female former pupils who handed Joachim the violin on which he famously performed the Beethoven concerto at his Diamond Jubilee concert in Berlin in 1899,¹⁰ and at the 5th Bonn Chamber Music Festival her quartet (with Else von Plank, Natalie Bauer-Lechner and Lucy Cambell – an ensemble that continued until at least 1917) shared activities with Paderewski and the Joachim Quartet. In England she maintained a number of society connections in Oxford (at which she gave several Sunday evening recitals at Balliol College with Ernest Walker, and performed with Arthur Williams, cellist of the Klingler Quartet¹¹) and played regularly in London with Donald Francis Tovey, who was also greatly influenced by Joachim, particularly in respect of tempo flexibility and agogic accentuation. After World War II she appears to have sunk into obscurity, retiring to her hometown where she died at the venerable age of ninety-two.

⁸ Robert Philip, *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (Yale, New Haven and London, 2004), 248.

⁹ Cited in Colin Lawson, 'The Revival of Historical Instruments' in Colin Lawson (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003), 161.

¹⁰ Andreas Moser, *Joseph Joachim – A Biography 1831-1899* (Wellby, London, 1901, trans. L. Durham), 328.

¹¹ The Klingler quartet, formed in 1905 soon took on the mantle of succeeding the Joachim Quartet and attempted to maintain the Joachim tradition, a matter referred to not entirely favourably by Carl Flesch in his *Memoirs* (Rockliff, London, 1957, trans. H. Keller), 250-1. The Klingler quartet made a number of recordings, the earliest of which date from 1911 (Haydn quartet, Op. 64/5 3rd and 4th movements; Schubert D minor quartet 3rd movement, re-released by Japanese HMV in *The Great Austrian and German String Quartets* Volume 7, catalogue no. SGR-8507).

Soldat-Roeger's biographical details are well-known and in 2007 much information about her was published on the MUGI website,¹² with details (including her repertoire) collated by Nicole Strohmann under the directorship of Joachim's biographer, Beatrix Borchard, at Hamburg University. Interest in her, here and elsewhere, has focussed on her gender,¹³ whilst Musgrave's work in the 1990s placed her in a sociological setting, examining her position within society concerts, and concluding thus:

'When, in 1955, she died at the age of ninety-two, her life had seen first a golden age of German orchestral music, followed by the destruction of many of its physical associations in two World Wars...With them [Albert Einstein, Margaret Deneke and Marie Soldat-Roeger] passed into history an era which now seems very distant. Yet the circumstance of the contact of these individuals gives the rare opportunity to gain a sharper sense of its context and character in relation to music, an era which surely grows the more fascinating the greater the distance of time which separates it from us.'¹⁴

Soldat-Roeger's connections with the 'classical' German school of violin playing (and Joachim personally) were thus deep-rooted and widespread. Her relationship with the Wittgenstein and Deneke families, for example, shows her closeness to the principal protagonists of this tradition. It was at the home of the Wittgensteins (who gave her the lifetime loan of her 1742 Guarneri del Gesu violin) that her quartet, with Richard Mühlfeld, performed Brahms' Clarinet Quintet to the composer two weeks before his death, whilst Margaret Deneke (whose mother, Clara, knew Clara Schumann) allegedly acted as Soldat-Roeger's agent, along with Mühlfeld and the 'cellist of the Joachim Quartet, Robert Hausmann.¹⁵

Whilst such genealogical connections are fascinating in themselves, they do not necessarily guarantee that Soldat-Roeger played in a way that acted as the expression of this important tradition of playing – one that is only imperfectly grasped from today's perspective anyway, but which is nonetheless earnestly sought by performing practice scholars. Soldat-Roeger's reception in reviews and articles upon her playing does, however, suggest powerfully that she intended emulate and succeeded in embodying Joachim's playing style to a remarkable extent. She gave the Vienna premiere of the Brahms Violin Concerto in 1885, gaining unambiguous support of the composer, as Henderson related:

'One of the most exciting moments in her artistic life was when she gave the first performance of Brahms' Concerto in Vienna, under the conductorship of Richter. Brahms, who was present, was highly delighted, and presented the young artist with a fan and a special edition de luxe of the concerto...It is a matter of

¹² Web address: <http://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/grundseite/grundseite.php?id=sold1863>

¹³ For example, she is mentioned briefly by Nancy B. Reich in Karin Pendle (ed), *Women and Music – A History* (Indiana University Press, Indiana, 2nd edition, 2001), 170.

¹⁴ Musgrave, 330.

¹⁵ Musgrave, 328. Musgrave notes however that in 1905, her name is listed (in the advertisement section at the back of the book) under the list of artists for whom 'Concert Direction E.L. Robinson' claims to be the 'sole agent' in J.A. Fuller-Maitland, *Living Masters of Music – Joseph Joachim* (John Lane: The Bodley Head, London, 1905).

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history that the first performance of this concerto in Berlin was, as was most fitting, given by the composer's staunch friend, Joachim, but at the second hearing it was played by Mme Soldat, and on this occasion Joachim conducted the orchestra.¹⁶

Reporting on her first visit to London, the *Musical Times* further re-enforces this view:

'The programme was completed by Brahms's Violin Concerto, introduced for performance by Miss Marie Soldat, a clever young artist, who has been a pupil of Herr Joachim. Miss Soldat played the work in a brilliant fashion. Her method and style are those of her master who must have found it an easy task to direct the studies of a young lady so highly gifted with musical feeling and intelligence.'¹⁷

Hermann Klein is more explicit, pointing to her striking similarity not only to Joachim's persona (no doubt influenced by her symbolic connection to the Brahms concerto) but also her apparently conscious intention to embody Joachim's style of playing:

'Mdlle Marie Soldat amounted to little short of a triumph. An executant of no mean calibre was expected, firstly because she was due to play the Brahms Violin Concerto, and secondly, because it was known that Dr Stanford, after hearing her on the Continent, had used his personal influence to secure her appearance at this concert, which he, of course, conducted. Still, the audience was not quite prepared for a player who may aptly be termed 'a female Joachim', that is to say, for a pupil of the great violinist who had contrived to acquire every leading characteristic of his style, perhaps even to the particular timbre of his tone. Surprisingly vigorous and masculine in her bowing and attack, Mdlle Soldat exhibited magnificent technique, a mastery of resource that enabled her to do ample justice to a work which many consider the most exacting of its class written for the violin. Purity of tone and clearness and charm of phrasing were also discernible among the qualities that evoked the favourable opinion of capable judges.'¹⁸

It would be tempting to assert that, owing to her youth, these performances still showed the heavy stamp of Soldat-Roeger's dutiful acquiescence to her teacher's attitude and style. Henderson, however, suggests that this manner of playing persisted even after Joachim's death and, importantly for us, into a period more closely connected to that of her recordings. Thus she remarks:

'Mme Marie Soldat-Roeger, with whom we have recently renewed acquaintance through the medium of the classical concerts, is a very interesting personality amongst the lady violinists of today, not only on account of her qualities as an artist, but also because she is the representative of a class which

¹⁶ Barbara Henderson, 'Marie Soldat-Roeger', *The Strad*, February, 1910, 364.

¹⁷ Review of her London debut (March 1, 1888) in *Musical Times*, April 1, 1888, 218.

¹⁸ Hermann Klein, *Musical Notes, 1889. An Annual Critical Report of Important Musical Events* (London, 1899), 26; in Musgrave, 324.

is rapidly becoming rare. She represents the Joachim school at its best period, and is imbued with all the traditions of the great classical school.¹⁹

This passage hints at the changes in musical style in the early twentieth century and suggests that Soldat-Roeger was an exception to many of them. Indeed, her apparent desire to perpetuate Joachim's style and philosophy into a period when this was becoming unfashionable (a matter unambiguously displayed by changing performing practices on early recordings²⁰) perhaps underpins the change in her critical reception, from being a close and successful embodiment of one of the most celebrated musicians of the nineteenth century, to a denigration of her style, at a time when more overt expressivity (epitomised by younger players of influence, such as Fritz Kreisler and Carl Flesch) was gaining significant support in a society that had few philosophical difficulties with the notion of artistic 'progress'.²¹

In the later part of her life Soldat-Roeger was a comparatively private figure, creating an interesting contrast with a Viennese musician who was her direct contemporary: Arnold Rosé (1863-1946). Rosé, like Soldat-Roeger, can be seen to have his artistic roots very much in the nineteenth century and, as Carl Flesch suggests, a style of playing rooted in the last decades of the century.²² Rosé was always a more conspicuous figure, as leader both of the Vienna Philharmonic for more than half a century and of one of the most famous string quartets of the period. His standing, moreover, lived on with a large and renowned discography, some of which was re-issued on CD relatively early on in the process of digitising historical recordings.²³ Yet Rosé's parity to the German tradition of playing espoused by Joachim is, genealogically and stylistically, far less direct than Soldat-Roeger's. Given the obvious importance of the performing practices associated with her former mentor, it is a matter of great value that she made recordings. Unlike Joachim himself (whose recordings hardly reflect his normal repertoire in performance and can only incompletely testify to his manner of interpretation), Soldat-Roeger recorded eighteenth- and nineteenth-century masterworks, most of which were indeed Joachim's repertoire: two Bach solo sonata movements, the first movement of Mozart's A major concerto (with Joachim's cadenza), Spohr's 9th concerto slow movement, and Beethoven's Romanze in F. She also recorded August Wilhelmj's arrangement of Bach's *Air*

¹⁹ Henderson, 362.

²⁰ Musgrave, 323.

²¹ The 'modernisation' of violin playing style, with a move towards greater rhythmic exactness, a gradual falling out of favour of the portamento and increasing use of vibrato, is clearly observed in recordings of the first third of the twentieth century and has been studied extensively by many scholars. An initial survey can be found in Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style – Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance 1900 – 1950* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992)

²² As Carl Flesch relates in his *Memoirs* (52), Rosé, after taking instruction from Heissler at the Vienna Conservatoire as a child, went to Paris to study with Massart, but returned to Vienna after Massart allegedly declared, 'Vous jouez très bien du violon, mais votre jeu ressemble à une belle fleur sans parfum!' Flesch remarked, 'His style was that of the 'seventies, with no concession to modern tendencies in our art'.

²³ See, for example, *Arnold Rosé and the Rosé String Quartet*, Biddulph, LAB 056 and 057 (1992).

BWV 1068 (the so-called 'Air on the G string') which Joachim allegedly loathed,²⁴ suggesting perhaps sympathy with but not subservience to Joachim's artistic ideals.

The performance of the first movement of Mozart's A major violin concerto²⁵ indicates very powerfully Soldat's parity to the Joachim tradition. This is reflected, symbolically, by her use of his cadenza, in a reading that matches remarkably closely the markings of his edition of the work as published in the *Violinschule*. Accordingly, Soldat is very sparing indeed in her use of vibrato, as found in the opening Adagio (which might be said to invite it, given its slow speed and the number of sustained notes). She uses the merest hint of vibrato on the second crotchet of the first bar, and the first crotchet of the second bar, whilst bar 5 has a wider, more obvious vibrato on the first crotchet. Where Soldat does use the device it is, in general, very narrow and discreet, and its employment on the more lyrical, cantabile passages (as from bar 79) confirms its purpose as a vocal ornament. Although Soldat may use vibrato a little more frequently than one might expect of Joachim (though it is all too easy to over-simplify his approach to the device and, as an analysis of his own *Romance in C* performance shows, he was far from averse to using it), it is, as his, tight and narrow – a discreet embellishment far removed from the practices of some of the enthusiastic adopters of the device in the early twentieth century.

Soldat uses portamenti regularly, and at times this perhaps explains (or at least results from) changes to Joachim's edition. Some of these changes are minor (such as at bar 26) or consistent with Joachim's own fingerings (as at bars 106 and 110), which may not be comprehensive and might imply or admit such treatment. Other changes of fingering are more fundamental, as at the opening of the Adagio. In all cases, Soldat's fingerings differ from Joachim's in their encouragement of portamento, and some changes (such as the substantial alteration at bars 44-45) result in staying on the same string to create greater connection within the phrase – an intention entirely consistent with the established 'German' aesthetic position:

It is in the linked facets of rhythm and articulation that Soldat's performance is most remarkable. Pairs of equal-length notes (as in the semiquavers) are rarely performed as notated; indeed, consecutive equal-length notes are almost always played unequally. In many respects, this frequent changing of notated rhythms might be said to constitute the use of agogic accentuation, a factor which characterised Joachim's own style of performance and was described in detail by 'Tamino' (an alias

²⁴ 'On the occasion of a series of Joachim quartet recitals in Paris at the beginning of the century, a passionate admirer of Capet gave a musical soirée ostensibly in honour of the German master, but in reality in order to let him hear Capet. [...] Now Capet played Bach's Chaconne, probably hardly in Joachim's spirit, and when it was over, Joachim said to the expectant Capet flatly: 'Couldn't you rather play something typically French, a piece characteristic of your nationality?' Instead of following this suggestion, Capet hit on the unhappy idea of playing the Bach Air in the Wilhelmj arrangement. Joachim grew more and more restless and, when Capet had finished, he flew into a rage, to the horror of all present, completely lost his self-control, and shouted in the utmost indignation at the unfortunate violinist: 'My dear sir, how can you as a musician have the tastelessness to play such a shameless falsification of a work by Bach? Capet burst into tears, and the guests present considered – rightly or wrongly – that Joachim's outburst was out of all proportion to the importance of the issue.' Flesch, 48.

²⁵ See annotated score, graph representation of inter-onset values and sound file of recording included in this folder.

of Donald Tovey), and as described in detail in Fuller-Maitland's biography of Joachim.²⁶ Indeed, Tovey's own performance of Beethoven's Op. 96 sonata with Adila Fachiri shows his embodiment of the practice, which he is known to have admired greatly.²⁷ Soldat's practice is quite variable, although it is a little more consistent in style than Joachim's own *Romance in C* performance (in which rhythms are over-dotted, reversed, and at times 'smoothed out' in a manner that can really only be understood as a generally flexible attitude to rhythm and notation). Soldat's rhythmic alterations can be classified thus:

1. Pairs of quavers: often over-dotted (dotted quaver plus semiquaver: as at 9, 13, 16, 17, 18)
2. Pairs of semiquavers followed by separate semiquavers: dotting of first pair of slurred semiquavers, and stressing the first of each group of 4 (10, 12, 13, 14, 15,19).
3. Successive pairs of semiquavers: these create a 'scotch snap' effect, shortening each pair with a slight accent on the first of each pair, with a gap between each pair.

There are other rhythmic modifications (such as over-dotting of the last two of a group of three quavers in bar 8) but the above types are remarkably consistent throughout the composition and, as such, might be said to comprise a well-known and understood realisation of the piece. Given Soldat's reported desire to emulate her teacher's style of playing (even so far as to incorporate his repertoire) it is tempting and indeed plausible to assert that Joachim inspired Soldat's performance style here, although this is, of course, empirically unverifiable.

More generally, Soldat's performance is quite flexible and even volatile in terms of tempo. This seems to suggest a degree of compensation rubato (that is, tempo rubato as understood in its original context in which time taken is subsequently restored). The most notable application is in *accelerandi*, employed in order to increase the dramatic import of certain phrases, as at bar 10 and (more conspicuously) the corresponding material at bar 108. In both of these places *accelerandi* are preceded by *ritardandi*, and some attempt appears to have been made to make such changes proportional. Another noteworthy passage is at bar 35 – here alternating antecedent and consequent phrases are alternately faster and slower in a manner that suggests that Soldat's motivation is to stress the rhetorical characteristics of the phrase and to intensify the musical argument.

Specific aspects of articulation relate to the execution of repeated-note figures (as at letter D) and the second solo after letter F, where Soldat executes the lines under a slur apparently in the upper half of the bow. Repeated-note figures at bar 42 are taken quite heavily, in the middle or lower third of the bow, with a springing wrist movement – Soldat here achieves the kind of solid, resonant sonority evidenced in Joachim's Bach *Bourée* performance.²⁸ Repeated quavers at bar 46 are also bounced in the middle of the bow and not, as might be the case with this

²⁶ J. A. Fuller-Maitland, *Living Masters of Music – Joseph Joachim* (John Lane: The Bodley Head, London, 1905), 28.

²⁷ Beethoven, Violin Sonata, Op. 96 (Donald Tovey and Adila Fachiri, c.1927; reissued on Symposium 1312

²⁸ Bach, *Bourée*, BWV 1002 (1903); re-issued on OPALCD 9851.

notation (and certainly as Spohr would have preferred it), in the upper half and on the string. This practice could well have reflected Joachim's own (his use of bounced strokes being well-known), and yet at the same time it suggests a more modern conception.

In the Bach *Largo* performance Joachim's sound world is very much apparent, particularly in the fast spreading of multiple stop chords and a warm, rounded and resonant tone, very infrequent use of vibrato, and a considered and intense reading. Soldat uses portamenti on a regular basis, though comparison with Joachim's unaccompanied Bach performances suggests that he might not have used the device quite so liberally. Some of these can be very slow and heavy (especially at 13, for example) and sometimes to and from harmonics (bar 5). Soldat also employs consecutive finger slides which were very much a constituent characteristic of the nineteenth-century German school (as at 8, 9, 11 and 14) and is sparing in her use of vibrato, the sound being mainly that of pure, *senza vibrato* tone. The most notable element here is her approach to tempo. Unlike the Mozart example, rhythms themselves are predominantly rendered as written, but Soldat practices great tempo flexibility. Also in contrast to the Mozart, this is executed mainly in terms of lingering, as in bars 6 or 10, or the insertion of pauses in 17 or the last bar. The result is an extraordinarily intense reading, fully exploring the 'largo' character. That this halting delivery is not necessarily a personal/general trait is proven by the manner in which she plays the Mozart, which is capricious, passionate and liable to hurry. The most likely explanation relates to the perception of the nature of the music itself and, in particular, the correct way to render slow movements with due consideration being given to their purpose and character.

The E major Prelude performance makes for an interesting comparison with Hugo Heermann (1909)²⁹ and Pablo de Sarasate (1904).³⁰ Soldat's playing, given the context, is quite steady and makes for a considered, thoughtful reading, with notable use of *ritardandi* to demarcate the various structural sections and cadences, as in the example below. Much of it is performed off the string, although analysis using time expansion tools (enabling the recording to be slowed down at the same pitch)³¹ reveals quite a solid, resonant stroke, perhaps in the lower third of the bow, rather than a lightweight modern *spiccato*. In common with Heermann and Sarasate, there is a tendency for quieter passages to be more lightly off the string and louder passages more on the string, although the connection is not as regular as in Heermann's case. Heermann's approach is less carefully shaped and rougher in tone than Soldat's, whilst Sarasate's breakneck, 'perpetuum mobile' tempo defies any form of substantial analysis. It is also interesting to note the gesture at the end. Soldat anticipates the bar-line with a re-take down-bow stroke for the new bar, which is similar to Heermann's realisation, although he executes this without a re-take down-bow. Overall, Soldat's performance gives the impression of a very considered approach to a movement that might be understood by some as a purely virtuosic exercise. This suggests her focus on musical aspects, and her desire to

²⁹ Bach Prelude in E, BWV 1006 (1909); re-issued on SYMPOSIUM 1071.

³⁰ Bach Prelude in E, BWV 1006 (1904); re-issued on OPALCD 9851.

³¹ I used the Capo programme, details of which are available at <http://supermegaultragroovy.com/products/Capo/>

shape and reveal musical phrases, textures and meanings – all aspects that might be said to be the legacy of nineteenth- (and eighteenth-) century aesthetic thought.

The opening passages of Soldat's Beethoven *Romance in F* recording are imbued with a cool, slightly distant quality, although the extent to which this can be attributed to her artistic aims or the limitations of this rather dim, acoustic recording is hard to discern. Soldat's tone is chaste, even severe, at the opening, with very discreet use of vibrato in the opening theme – the device is only detectable on longer notes, as at the start of bars 2, 3 and 4 (the first bar being performed with a pure tone). As elsewhere, Soldat's performance matches Joachim's edition of the work almost exactly, although she adds a shift to 3rd position at the third crotchet of bar 1, and executes a slide on a 4th finger (very much in the nineteenth-century German tradition) during the second beat of bar 2. In bar 7, she slurs together the three separate semiquavers as printed in Joachim's edition, and executes the turn rather idiosyncratically, as elsewhere in this performance. Perhaps unusually for an early recording, the piano tutti is played in full rather than cut (as it is in Rosé's 1909 performance, for example) and is notable for regular use of spread chords – a characteristic trait of many nineteenth-century pianists of this tradition such as Karl Reinecke³²).

Soldat's playing is stylistically consistent with the opening. Accordingly, turns are treated variably, the lower auxiliary note (G) being stressed and lengthened in bar 20, and the turn itself prefixed by an additional D in bar 26. Here, too, Soldat embellishes Joachim's relatively plain fingering scheme by performing very deliberate portamenti in bars 20 (to the open E) and 21 (to the B-flat), and in 22 adapts Joachim's fingering by sliding down on the fourth finger in the last crotchet. She also adapts the phrasing and slurs, articulating the last two quavers of the 2nd beat of bar 23, and slurring into the third crotchet in bar 25. Upon the commencement of the demisemiquaver passagework in bar 28, it becomes clear that Soldat is executing Joachim's patterns of slurs and slurred staccato; this is taken at an accordingly conservative tempo. Nonetheless, she adapts the fingering at the closing cadence by sliding up the 'A'-string, in a bar in which Joachim's edition does not make explicit which fingering might be used upon exiting the top C-natural.

From this point Soldat's performance, whilst retaining a number of elements of Joachim's edited scheme, becomes rather more radically independent of it – in the passage from bars 37-39, for example. As in the Mozart concerto performance, it is evident that Soldat saw small-scale manipulations of rhythm and resulting agogic accents as an intrinsic part of expressive performance, as apparently did Joachim. Thus, although Soldat does not always carry out Joachim's phrasing literally, there is little to suggest that her performance is outside his expressive parameters. Thus, in bar 35 the first sextuplet semiquaver of each beat is separated and slightly lengthened, the time taken being restored in the following three slurred notes. The ritardando into the recapitulation of the theme at bar 38 is an equally natural bi-product of a flexible and responsive style of playing. In the recapitulation of the theme at bar 38, Soldat varies her style of delivery by executing a form of portato at bar 41 on the semiquavers, and again after the turn in bar 44. Whilst her fingering

³² Karl Reinecke (1824-1910) made a number of piano rolls, including those for the superior Welte-Mignon system, in c.1905. Two rolls can be heard on *Nineteenth-Century Pianists on Welte-Mignon*, Archiphon ARC 106.

here seems to be broadly similar to the opening of the piece, her subtle stylistic variation is evident in the fact that in bar 42 the 4th-finger descending shift is executed this time very lightly and discreetly.

Remarks of Creighton and Potter notwithstanding, Soldat provides further evidence in this performance of the virile style of playing commented upon by reviewers in the nineteenth century. The F minor section at bar 59 is passionately delivered, the re-take down-bows at bars 61 and 63 adding to the rhetorical forcefulness of this passage, whilst in the D-flat major statement of the initial theme Soldat returns to a more considered style of playing, executing a *ritenuto* and under-dotting the double-dotted rhythm in bar 65. This slower, calmer rendition of the theme is repeated on its final statement, and the remainder of the movement continues to provide evidence of varied tempo, phrasing and agogic accentuation. Noteworthy features include the use of a strong, French *détaché* at bars 70-74, along with the mannerism of anticipating the bar-line slightly with a lengthened first semiquaver. Soldat also practices the slurred staccato in bar 83, also characteristic of related nineteenth-century violinists of the classical German tradition.

Soldat's Spohr 9th concerto slow movement performance is perhaps the best-known example of her discography. The choice of this item, deemed by Tully Potter to be her finest record,³³ is partly justified by her connection not only to Joachim, but – through her former teacher, Augustus Pott – with the composer himself. Her performance makes for a fascinating comparison with Spohr's own edition of the movement, complete with fingerings, bowings and even vibrato signs, as found at the conclusion of his *Violinschule*.³⁴ As elsewhere in her discography, Soldat bases her performance closely on nineteenth-century models – perhaps surprising, given the relatively late date of these performances. In this case the similarities with Spohr's text are striking. At the same time, she does not adhere slavishly to the composer's fingerings and other markings and uses the vibrato a little more frequently. That this is so is hardly surprising in a musical culture far removed from today's obsession with 'urtext' editions and 'faithfulness' to a composer's supposed stipulations and requirements. It seems highly unlikely that the prevailing attitude (which one might describe as 'liberty within the law') would have given rise to literal applications of edited texts however much the editor in question was part of that aesthetic tradition and bound to the performer by perceived ties of pedagogic authority.

Soldat's adaptations of Spohr's markings seem entirely congruent with what we can discern of German nineteenth-century performance from other sources, such as annotated editions, the changes she makes being consistent with the style and manner of execution found in other sources from this tradition. Thus she adds a number of portamenti to the opening theme, which, in spite of the fact that she adds a few vibrati, she performs with the selective application of the device to long, accented or harmonically/metrically important notes. Soldat's tempi are a little more varied than the text implies, despite Spohr's own comment that in his own music tempo rubato and other such fluctuations are not really necessary or indeed

³³ See footnote 5, sleeve notes.

³⁴ Louis Spohr, *Violinschule* (Vienna, 1833, trans. C. Rudolphus, 1843), 212-216.

desirable.³⁵ Thus she begins a little under tempo, but the piano prelude to the second solo, commencing at bar 18, is taken a little faster. The decorated bar before the cadence, itself rhythmically complex as notated, is performed in a conspicuously different rhythm. The accompanying scanned score copy annotated to show Soldat's principal performance features includes my hand-written approximation of Soldat's rhythms as performed.

The clarity and precision of this performance is remarkable, particularly in the case of the exquisitely accurate chromatic passages and the crisply articulated up-bow staccato, both of which make Potter's assertion that she was past her prime somewhat perplexing.

Soldat's other recordings were of August Wilhelmj's transcriptions of Bach's *Air* BWV 1068, and Schumann's *Abendlied*, Op. 85/12. The inclusion of these rather more popular items is a little curious when placed alongside the higher aspirations of her other recorded works – perhaps this reflected a commercial decision to include 'accessible' repertoire. The inclusion of the Bach *Air* is particularly surprising given Joachim's strength of feeling against it, although, of course, it may reflect the fact that twenty years after his death Soldat perhaps felt liberated from his censure. She shows relatively little appetite for it in performance, however, and the rendition is lacking in cohesion. She uses a regular vibrato, but it is very tight and lacks variation within the implied phrasing of the sustained notes, creating an oddly 'nervous' effect. Portamenti are quite discreet, but the resulting performance, rather than coming across as tastefully reserved, sounds strangely uninvolved. Certainly, Rosé's quartet rendition of this³⁶ (with pronounced, accentual portamenti) is much more successful within a broadly similar sound-world, whilst Jëno Hubay, also her contemporary, creates much more intensity, albeit with radically different tone and laden with his characteristically heavy, wide and slow vibrato.³⁷ Oddly, Soldat seems to execute an 'L' portamento in bar 11. This form of slide, associated with the French school and repudiated by German players and theorists,³⁸ is very rarely found in the playing of German school violinists; it is odd and even ironic that Soldat, who was at the very epicentre of the Joachim tradition, practiced it. It further adds to the impression of stylistic indecisiveness in this movement.

The Schumann performance is a little more successful. Taken at a very slow speed, Soldat imbues the work with a notion of consecration. Once again, vibrato is regular but very discreet, and portamenti are relatively light.

Indeed, the matter of these latter recordings underlines their curious status amongst performance practice scholars. It is tempting to speculate as to whether the impression of Soldat on record would have been rather different had she not

³⁵ 'The time in each part of this Concerto remains unchanged. The compositions of the Author seldom require the time to be increased, or decreased to heighten the expression. Generally, only such compositions demand it which are not composed in one form, or imagined in equal measure of time. The Scholar should rarely, and with moderation, if his feeling should induce him to it, use the means of expression already mentioned, as by any alteration in the measure of time, the whole character of the composition might be destroyed.' Spohr, *Violinschule*, 202.

³⁶ Bach, *Air* BWV 1068 (arr. A. Wilhelmj), Rosé Quartet (1927); reissued on Biddulph LAB 056.

³⁷ Bach, *Air* BWV 1068 (arr. A. Wilhelmj), with orchestra (1929); reissued on Biddulph LAB 045.

³⁸ See David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003), 92-3.

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recorded the Bach *Air*, and if this was the only record of her we could scarcely envisage the confidence and precision of her playing in her Mozart and Spohr performances in particular. If at the age of c.60 she was indeed past her prime as a player, her playing in her youth must have been breathtaking and, certainly, she shows a technical mastery beyond the security of Joachim's own recordings, made when he was truly in old age. This shows perhaps the vulnerability of a player's reception on record to the technical success of the recording and, indeed, the nature of repertoire recorded. It also acts as a salutary lesson to performer-scholars who base their historical performance intuitions solely on the intelligence of recordings, and makes Soldat's inclusion of classical masterworks particularly valuable in terms of our understanding of how she played them and, indeed, how they were understood by the father of this performing tradition – Joachim himself.