COUNTERING THE SOCIAL PROHIBITION OF WOMEN'S VIOLIN-PLAYING IN ENGLAND 1770–1872: SIX SOLO VIOLINISTS ON THE ENGLISH CONCERT STAGE

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant musical changes for women during the long nineteenth century was gaining access to the violin. The instrument was initially regarded as 'unladylike', and an informal social prohibition existed on women playing it for most of the period. However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, female violin playing became more acceptable and the violin subsequently became an immensely popular and fashionable instrument for young women to play.

The advent of the violin as an instrument for women sparked heated debate in the press, and numerous articles advocating for female players appeared in publications such as *The Musical Times* in 1906, *The Woman's World* in 1890, and *The Strad* in 1894.[1] These typically started by refuting the common objections to female violin playing, followed by lengthy lists and biographical information of historical female violinists: the press clearly regarded the influence of women violinists earlier in the century as significant, and as forming part of a long tradition of performers dating back to the end of the eighteenth century and beyond. However, much of the recent scholarship on nineteenth-century women violinists has focused on players at the end of the period, with the impact and influence of these earlier players not fully acknowledged.

Through a combination of examining underpinning contemporary socio-musical ideas such as attitudes towards virtuosity and accomplishment, alongside three case-study chapters which examine nineteenth-century reviews in-depth, this work seeks to redress the balance, and consider the influence, impact and significance that the lives and careers of women violinists between 1770–1872 had on the overcoming of the violin 'prejudice'.

[1] F. G. Edwards, 'Lady Violinists (Concluded).' *The Musical Times* 47, no. 765 (1906), 735-40; F. Joyce Barratt, 'The Violin as an Instrument for Girls,' *The Woman's World* 3 (1890): 651-654; [Unsigned] 'Lady Violinists,' *The Strad* 5, no. 52 (August 1894): 122-123.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Chapter one contains written material taken from my chapter 'Notions of virtuosity, female accomplishment, and the violin 'ban' at the turn of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries' in *The Routledge Handbook on Women's Work in Music*, ed. Rhiannon Matthias. Oxon: Routledge, 2021. Copyright is held by the publisher Routledge.

Chapter five contains written material taken from my chapter 'Scatter[ing] all prejudices to the winds': Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso as leaders of the nineteenth-century all-male string quartet' in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Musical Leadership: the nineteenth century and beyond,* ed. Laura Hamer & Helen Julia Minors (Routledge, Forthcoming).

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Introduction

Overview

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century, an informal–and largely unspoken–prohibition existed on women playing the violin, and one of the most significant musical changes for women during this period was gaining access to the instrument. This informal proscription was in evidence across Europe, but appears to have been particularly pervasive in England; the female violinists who performed there in the first half of the century were almost exclusively from the Continent. Existing scholarship on the topic is limited, and discusses the prohibition in varying degrees of certitude; the most extensive study, by Paula Gillett, refers to an 'informal ban', while Simon McVeigh's work on women violinists at the end of the century describes the instrument as 'forbidden territory, the instrument of male domination'.[1] Gillett's use of 'ban' is problematic, even with the qualifier 'informal' applied. The idea of a 'ban' implies something explicit and absolute, but the reality is that some women *did* play the violin prior to the late nineteenth century, and gained positive critical and audience responses to their performances; it is therefore unlikely that musicians of the era would have thought of the violin as being explicitly 'banned' as an instrument for women.

Nineteenth-century sources typically took an approach most akin to McVeigh's, citing a 'prejudice' against female violinists, and the use of this term throughout the century is indicative of the longevity of the phenomenon. In 1818, *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* remarked: 'We cannot help regarding the exclusion of females from the violin, as a prejudice, and nothing but a prejudice'.[2] Over 50 years later, in 1869, *The Musical World* echoed their sentiments, that 'There is a strong and scarcely unnatural prejudice against a female fiddler'. Regarded as 'unladylike' and socially prohibited for women to play for most of the period, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, female violin playing became more acceptable and the violin subsequently became an immensely popular and fashionable instrument for young women to play.

The advent of the violin as an instrument for women sparked heated debate in the press, and numerous articles advocating for female players appeared in publications such as *The Musical*

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[1] Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 77 and Simon McVeigh, '"As the Sand on the Sea Shore": Women Violinists in London's Concert Life around 1900,' in *Essays on the History of English Music in Honour of John Caldwell: Sources, Style, Performance, Historiography,* ed. E. Hornby & D.N. Maw (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, 2010), 233.

[2] [Unsigned] 'Madame Mara, Nee Schmelling' *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* (1 April 1818), 171.

Times in 1906, *The Woman's World* in 1890, and *The Strad* in 1894.[3] These typically opened with refutations of the common objections for female violin playing, followed by lengthy lists and biographical information of historical female violinists. The press clearly regarded the influence of women violinists earlier in the century as significant, and as forming part of a long tradition of performers dating back to the end of the eighteenth century and beyond. Gillett describes the 'demise' of the 'ban' as 'a process that began in the 1870s and developed….rapidly'.[4] However, women violinists performed in England before this point, and just as a reframing of the 'ban' is warranted, so too is a reconsideration of Gillett's assertion that this waned from the 1870s onwards. Wilma Norman Neruda (later Lady Hallé) is generally credited as being the catalyst for the relaxing of attitudes towards women violinists during the late 1860s and 70s, and following her enormous success, the first female violinists were admitted to the Royal Academy of Music in 1872. The numbers of female players increased rapidly as the end of the century approached, as did the scope of their musical activities, resulting in their eventual inclusion in professional orchestras in the 1900s. These end-of-the century players were hugely important, and much of the existing literature on the topic consequently focuses on these closing decades. Contrary to the impression this scholarly focus gives, there *were* successful women players before this point, but there has been little real assessment of their impact and their contribution to the waiving of the prejudice against female violinists therefore tends to be minimised.

Literature

The work of twentieth and twenty-first century feminist musicologists has illuminated the lives and work of many musical women in the nineteenth century – most notably those of Clara Wieck Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel – whilst highlighting the socio-musical obstacles and limits they encountered. Feminist musicology of the 1990s resulted in the publication of a number of texts on women's music making, many of which included passing or brief references to female violinists. Examples include Karin Pendle's *Women & Music: A History,* which outlined useful biographical information on several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century violinists, and Carol Neuls-Bates' *Women in Music,* which referred to several female violinists and included original source

[3] F. G. Edwards, 'Lady Violinists (Concluded).' *The Musical Times* 47, no. 765 (1906), 735-40; F. Joyce Barratt, 'The Violin as an Instrument for Girls,' *The Woman's World* 3 (1890): 651-654; [Unsigned] 'Lady Violinists,' *The Strad* 5, no. 52 (August 1894): 122-123.

[4] Gillett, *Musical Women,* 77

materials relating to the American violinist Camilla Urso.[5] Meanwhile, contextual work such as Nancy B. Reich's 'Women Musicians: A Question of Class' provided valuable supporting theoretical frameworks.[6] One of the most interesting revelations exposed by this musicological work was the gendered division of instruments during the nineteenth century. However, although these sources were useful for gaining an overview of women's lives and activities, further in-depth discussion and research was needed regarding the subject of gender and instrument choice.

The most substantial work on this topic appears in Paula Gillett's *Musical Women in England*. Gillett explores a range of contextual issues, including conflict between public and private music-making and music as a profession for women.[7] More significantly, Gillett dedicates two chapters to women and the violin: 'Woman and the Devil's Instrument' and 'The New Woman and Her Violin', which constitutes the largest-scale work on the topic to date, and explores the work of women violinists from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. Gillett attributes the social prohibition of the violin as an instrument for women to its occult links, aesthetic objections, and the homoerotic connotations of a woman playing an instrument ascribed as female. This thesis builds on Gillett's work by examining the links between the violin and the occult, and examining the impact of nineteenth-century notions of virtuosity on the bounds of women's music-making. Much of Gillett's work focuses on women at the end of the nineteenth century, as the decades from 1870 onwards saw a rapid increase in the take-up of the violin by women, but there is therefore scope to extend this work to the earlier part of the century.

Simon McVeigh's chapter '"As the Sand on the Sea Shore": Women Violinists in London's Concert Life around 1900' forms the other significant body of work on the topic of women violinists.[8] McVeigh's discussion explores the careers of a number of female violinists active around 1900, alongside thorough contextualisation which explores aspects including the challenges of establishing a career, repertoire, chamber music and the broader musical landscape. However, as in Gillett's work, McVeigh's focus is the end of the nineteenth century; consequently, there is little discussion of women violinists before this point.

An important precursor to McVeigh and Gillett's work was Rita Steblin's article 'The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments in the Western Tradition', which explores the

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[5] Karin Pendle, *Women & Music: a History,* Ed. Karin Pendle, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: an Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present,* ed. Carol Neuls-Bates. 2nd ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996).

[6] Nancy B. Reich 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,' in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[7] Gillett, *Musical Women.*

[8] McVeigh, 'As the Sand on the Sea Shore'.

ramifications of the 'gender association of musical instruments.'[9] Steblin's work traced the gendered division of instruments back as early as the fifteenth century, and outlined a history of proscribed instruments for women. Steblin's commentary was underpinned by links to the sociological function of instruments, explaining that by the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the culture of proscribed instruments effectively confined women to the home, ensuring chastity and marriageability. The work also briefly outlined how nineteenth-century ideas about female nature informed thought about appropriate instruments. Steblin concluded by returning to the sociological implications around instrument choice, remarking that 'the gender stereotyping of musical instruments was an important factor in hindering women from achieving an equal place with men as musical creators and performers.'[10]

Most modern writing on nineteenth-century female violinists focuses on the better-known female players from the end of the century, and the period from 1872 onwards, when the first woman violinist was admitted to the Royal Academy of Music. Existing work on women violinists before the 1870s is scattered throughout literature on women in music, and this thesis therefore adds to the existing literature by presenting a cohesive study of these earlier violinists, considering what their lives, careers and reception reveal about attitudes to the playing of the violin by women during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century.

Research questions and aims

The objections to women violinists were complex, and rarely addressed directly in contemporary literature, but modern work on the topic has suggested a range of linked factors, including an aesthetic element, disruption of the heteronormative male/female relationship between player and instrument, the violin's occult links, and ideas about appropriate modes of female music making.

Much of the recent scholarship on nineteenth-century women violinists has focused on players at the end of the period, with the impact and influence of these earlier players rarely acknowledged. This thesis seeks to redress the balance and consider the influence, impact and significance that the lives and careers of earlier women violinists had on the overcoming of objections to the violin as an instrument for women, alongside a consideration of factors which may have prevented female players achieving the 'lasting impact' of their later counterparts.

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[9] Rita Steblin, 'The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments in the Western Tradition.' *Canadian University Music Review* 16/1 (1995), 128-144.

[10] Ibid., 144.

The main research questions of this work focus on understanding the form that the 'prejudice' against female violinists took in the period 1770–1872. The thesis examines the ideological and practical barriers that women players faced during this time, the extent to which and in what ways the 'prejudice' influenced the reception of these players, and how the phenomenon affected the careers of women who did pursue violin performance.

Structure

This thesis consists of two contextual chapters, 'Notions of virtuosity, female accomplishment, and the violin 'ban' at the turn of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries' and 'Fiend-tenanted fiddles: The impact of the violin as occult instrument in female playing in the nineteenth century', followed by three case-studies, 'Women violinists in late eighteenth-century England: Louise Gautherot and Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen', 'The English reception and legacy of the Milanollo sisters, 1837–1845' and 'Scatter[ing] all prejudices to the winds': Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso', each of which is preceded by a contextual preface. The first two chapters consider socio-musical factors which I argue influenced perceptions of the violin as an instrument for women during the nineteenth century. The first of these discusses the implications of nineteenth-century notions of virtuosity on female violin playing through an exploration of contemporary sources concerned with female accomplishment, and presents this as a contributing factor to objections around women playing the violin. The second chapter responds to Gillett's theory that the violin's occult links contributed towards it being thought unsuitable for women. This chapter highlights the absence of corroborating evidence in nineteenth-century dialogue concerning women and the violin, assesses the extent to which the notion of violin as occult instrument persisted during the nineteenth century, and how this might have impacted on ideas about the violin as an instrument for women.

The three case study chapters consider three distinct periods within 1770–1872. The first wave of women violinists might be considered to have appeared in Europe around the end of the eighteenth century – about a hundred years before Gillett places the 'ban's' demise. This group of players included Gertrude Mara (Schmeling) (b.1774), Regina Schlick, (b.1761), Louise Gautherot (b. c.1762) and Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen (b.1745). Of these, Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen featured most heavily in England, and performed over several seasons in London; they therefore form the focus of the first case study chapter. Following this first 'wave', there appears to have been a dearth of female players performing in England until the appearance of the Milanollo sisters, Maria (1832–1848) and Teresa (1827–1904) in the late 1830s–40s, and the second case study chapter examines the career and reception of the siblings. The final case study chapter relates to Wilma Norman-Neruda (later Lady Hallé) (1838–1911) and Camilla Urso (c.1840–1902). These

two violinists played in England around the period when attitudes towards women violinists are typically perceived as having started to relax. This final chapter explores the complex reception of Urso and Norman-Neruda at this pivotal point in the violin's history.

It is important to note that these were far from the only women playing the violin in the period 1770–1872, and there were numerous other players whose names I encountered while researching this project, whose lives and careers were not sufficiently documented in primary source materials to allow for successful exploration, or which would have involved a more extensive degree of investigation than was practical within the scope of this thesis. These other players were almost exclusively from continental Europe, with the majority being young Italian or French women, many of whom first appeared as children. Little biographical information or existing scholarship exists for many of these players, and there are also very few surviving reviews of their performances. From the existing source material, it is difficult to tell exactly what form these women's careers took, but most seem to have carved out professional lives as concert soloists, although it is not clear to what extent they were able to sustain these careers past a marriageable age.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, a smattering of female players appeared across Europe, including Gertrude Mara (1749-1833) and Henriette Larrivée (1764-1839), who both performed in London, and Regina Strinasacchi (1764-1839), for whom Mozart wrote his violin sonata K454. During the first half of the nineteenth century, there appear to have been curiously few women violinists active until the mid-century; those names which do appear have scant surviving biographical or concert information available. More female players emerged from the mid-century onwards, including Bertha Brousil (1838-1919), who, with her siblings, made numerous appearances in England and the Ferni sisters Carolina (1839-1936) and Vincenzina (1837-1926).

Very little is known about the extent to which English women might have taken up the violin as an instrument for recreational purposes before 1872. Although it is possible that some women did play the violin in private, these histories are harder to trace, being dependent on private sources such as diaries and letters. Two examples that are known about are Lady Charlotte Campbell Bury (1775-1861) and Lady Anne Blunt (1837-1917), daughter of Ada Lovelace, granddaughter of Lord Byron, and owner of the 'Lady Blunt' Stradivarius. Both women are known to have played the violin for leisure, but little more is known than this. It is possible that future exploration of collections of nineteenth-century women's diaries and letters may reveal further women who also played the violin recreationally. The difficulty in locating source material relating to these professional and amateur women players created challenges in tracing a reception history; therefore the case studies presented in this work focus on the best-known women violinists of the period. However, further study of lesser known players would make a valuable addition to the

existing literature on women and the violin. The difficulty in locating source material relating to these women created challenges in tracing a reception history; therefore the case studies presented in this work focus on the best-known women violinists of the period. However, further study of lesser known players would make a valuable addition to the existing literature on women and the violin.

The case study chapters draw both on existing academic work, especially that of Gillett, who laid so much of the groundwork for future scholarship, and my own primary source research. This includes sources such as journals, collections of letters, concert reviews, press advertisements and programmes. There is close analysis of the reception of the players who comprise the case studies, alongside an outline of their activities and careers, before I consider what critical reactions over the course of these three periods might reveal about attitudes towards female violin playing prior to 1872, what forms the careers of these women took, and what obstacles and challenges they faced.

Methodology

Identification of primary sources predominantly took place online through the Gale online and Proquest databases. Proquest was used to access the *C19: The Nineteenth Century Index*, *British Periodicals* and *Proquest Historical Newspapers* collections. Gale online was used to access the *British Library Newspapers*, *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals, The Illustrated London News* and *The Times Digital Archive, 1785-2019* collections. Some further sources such as etiquette books and behaviour manuals were identified through existing scholarship and library catalogues, and were accessed in hard-copy at Cambridge University Library.

Reviews of individual players were located by a trial-and-error approach, using the advanced search functions on the online databases. This approach was necessitated by the variations in spelling and form of the players' names. Reviews were found through inputting surname and date period (generally year of player's birth onwards), with the addition of 'violin' where results were too generalised. This approach was used for two reasons. Firstly, players (irrespective of gender) were often listed in advertisements, listings and reviews under their title and surname (rather than forename). Therefore, searching by surname captured listings for each player regardless of what format their name appeared in (for example, searching 'Neruda' would capture both 'Madame/M. Neruda' and 'Wilhelmina Neruda').

Secondly, variations in spellings, forms and anglicisations of some players forenames occurred, meaning that searching by surname alone was more practical. For example, Norman-Neruda seems to have used 'Wilma' in everyday life, but appeared in concert listings as both

'Wilhelmine' or 'Wilhelmina'; similarly, 'Louise' Gautherot also appeared as 'Louisa'. This occurred to a lesser extent with surnames, although misspellings still occurred, for example 'Sirmen' appeared at least once as 'Syrmen', and I carried out additional searches under these alternative spellings as I encountered them.

Marital names also required some additional thought. For example, after starting her career under the name 'Neruda', Wilma was later listed under both this name and as 'Neruda' and, later, 'Lady Hallé'. Meanwhile, Lombardini Sirmen often appeared just as 'Sirmen'. For this reason some experimentation was needed with name combinations in order to ensure all relevant materials had been identified. Additional searches were carried out under players' maiden names where necessary; for example, although Louise Gautherot appeared never to have played in England under her maiden name of 'Deschamps', additional searches were carried out in order to verify this.

For each of the case studies, date parameters were set from year to birth up to 1900. This allowed me to capture contemporary reviews as well as sources from later in the century, which offered valuable retrospective perspectives on each player. Materials were read through in chronological order; for each player, I aimed to read all of the sources available through the online portals; although this was achievable for five of the case studies, due to the length of Norman-Neruda's career and the vast amount of sources connected with this, materials were only consulted up to the date of1873. This approach enabled me to read a large amount of contemporary sources relating to my case studies; however, I imagine that there are still many further sources which were not identified or located during this study. Nevertheless, the range of sources encountered through my research means I am confident that an accurate picture of each player's biographical information and reception has been achieved.

Context: Music Journalism in the period 1770-1872

Press reports and critiques of the six women violinist case studies form a focal point of this thesis, therefore a brief discussion of the music journalism at the heart of this enquiry is included here. There are significant challenges in working with these sort of source materials, as outlined by Leanne Langley, 'the sheer number and bulk of sources to be consulted is oppressive; their varying quality and their diffuseness, anonymity, and potential unreliability all defy scholarly use.'[11]

Around the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, the 'fashionable rage' for music, resulted in a corresponding shift in the press, and the consequent emergence of the first headed

[11] Leanne Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', *Notes* (Music Library Association) 46, no. 3 (1990): 583.

concert reviews appearing in London newspapers.[12] Christina Bashford paints a description of a flourishing London musical scene, inhabited by 'concerts, music lectures, piano purchasing, and, in particular, acres of newsprint devoted to music'.[13] The early nineteenth century was important for the emergence of weekly arts and news publications, including the *Examiner* in 1808, and both the *Athenaeum* and *Spectator* in 1828, which contained 'regular, critical and well-informed coverage of music and music events'.[14] Meanwhile, specialised musical journals also appeared, including the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* in 1818, *Harmonicon* in 1823 and *Musical World* in 1836, *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* in 1842.[15] Members of the public interested in music relied on the press for 'guidance about what to see and hear, what to sing and play, what to think', but Langley's work flags the disparity between press and musical culture; it was far easier to read about 'great music' than it was to hear it.[16]

Much of the recent literature on nineteenth-century criticism highlights division between reviews which appeared in journals and magazines versus that published in newspapers. Leanne Langley's work explains:

> Most daily and weekly newspapers carried regular columns of writing on music (usually concert and opera notices), while general magazines and quarterly literary reviews published at a more leisurely pace much of the best musical literature available– philosophical or imaginative essays, lengthy book reviews, even analyses of musical style.[17]

Christina Bashford similarly describes differing approaches to music criticism across publications, 'Daily papers, for instance the Morning Chronicle and Morning Post, carried fresh, "morning-after" reactions to repertory and performers, while the fine-arts weeklies, among them the *Atlas*, the *Athenaeum*, and the *Spectator*, published more measured comments and often produced the most penetrating observations and informed criticism of the period'.[18] It is also worth considering the

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[12] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

[13] Christina Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets and the London Press, 1836-ca. 1850', *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2000): 84.

[14] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 586.

[15] Ibid., 588.

[16] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

[17] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 585.

[18] Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets', 92.

readership that these critics were writing for. Music journals were, in the main, published in London, and were aimed at 'a more-or-less general musical audience'.[19] Leanne Langley's work usefully outlines the nature of the readership of periodicals:

> Readers must have had an awareness of past and present trends in music, besides technical knowledge and a real musical curiosity; otherwise, the printed music example, considerations of formal symmetry and emotional meaning, and constant references to specific works, operas, opus numbers, and keys would have been meaningless.'[20]

However, the readership of music criticism during the period was 'mixed in social level and musical sophistication'.[21]

Despite this, it was the newspapers which 'traditionally remained most attractive to fulltime music critics'.[22] However, most critics worked on a freelance basis, and would often write for more than one paper.[23] Stanford's critique of nineteenth-century music criticism highlights 'the fashion of one critic speaking through the mouths of several newspapers', which he denounced as 'a most dangerous [practice], for such a critic, however honest, may at times nod and if he perchance take an unduly favourable or unfavourable view, its effect is multiplied five or six times, instead of standing as it should on its merits once expressed.'[24] More recent work has also drawn attention to the issues around this practice. Leanne Langley describes a similar picture of 'literary recycling and self-borrowing (often without acknowledgement)' as 'common practices', explaining:

> Most London music journalists, then as now, were freelancers working for more than one periodical, often anonymously and perhaps shading the tone and content of their writing to suit a given journal's market profile; anyone's musical opinions can change with time and repeated hearings of a work.'[25]

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[19] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 585.

[20] Ibid., 587.

[21] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

[22] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 586-7.

[23] Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets', 92.

[24] Charles Villiers Stanford, 'Some Aspects of Musical Criticism in England', *Fortnightly Review* 1934, 55, no. 330 (1894): 829-830.

[25] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', Footnote 4.

Bashford's work on the London press in the mid-nineteenth century explains that at this point, 'The notion of music journalism as a discrete profession was arguably some way off, and most writers used their (low) income from writing assignments as a way of supplementing other sources.'[26] There was therefore a broad spectrum of musical knowledge within the pool of journalists writing on music, from those who had 'little or no specialist knowledge' to others who had been trained and were active as professional musicians.'[27]

Meirion Hughes describes a shift in journalism around the mid century, writing that by the 1850s, 'the literary and gentlemanly amateurism of an earlier age had already given way to a more professional approach', and music criticism having 'established a secure place in journalistic culture'.[28] Hughes notes a corresponding shift between the expansion of the newspaper market after 1855 and the increased volume of music criticism, but reports that 'the coverage of music in the literary journals was however patchy, with the Athenaeum being for many years the only publication of its type with a regular music column', until the creation of *The Musical World* in 1836 and the *Musical Times* in 1844.[29]

There are some issues around the use of nineteenth-century press items as source material. Critics were almost universally male, which is likely to have had some bearing on the critical language used in relation to the female performers under focus in this thesis. Many reviews were unsigned and therefore essentially anonymous. Christina Bashford's work on this acknowledges the frustrations this poses to the modern researcher, but demonstrates that with some tenacious detective work, it is possible to make 'tentative' links between writings and their authors.[30] Meanwhile, Leanne Langley has urged caution using these unsigned newspaper reviews in scholarship, 'Anonymous and frequently susceptible to influence, however, these are a less reliable guide to public taste than careful analysis of other musical data in the papers, such as advertisements. More relevant as criticism are the pioneering music review sections in the monthly magazines'.[31]

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[26] Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets', 93.

[27] Ibid., 93.

[28] Meirion Hughes, The English Musical Renaissance and the Press, 1850-1914: Watchmen of Music (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 4.

[29] Ibid., 4-5.

[30] Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets', 101. A useful avenue for future enquiry would be to identify who the authors of the nineteenth-century reviews included in this study might have been, and Bashford's study provides a useful model for how this might be achieved. However, such a study was beyond the scope of this work.

[31] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

Critics had varying levels of musical knowledge, which had ramifications for the quality of reviews; Leanne Langley remarks that 'some were genuinely able as critics, others completely inept.'[32] Charles Villiers Stanford, writing at the end of the century, noted a 'danger' that 'editors, who happen themselves to be ignorant of music, should engage the services of writers almost equally ignorant merely because they possess the gift of literary style.'[33] Despite discrepancies in quality between the newspapers and periodicals, many of the 'big name' musical writers of the day contributed to the musical newspaper columns, including Henry Chorley, J. W. Davison, George Hogarth, Joseph Bennett and J. A. Fuller Maitland.[34] However, even within this pool of authoritative figures, formal musical study was not necessarily a given, and Langley notes of Chorley and Davison that 'neither had much musical training'.[35] Thoroughness and objectivity were both lacking, and Bashford describes a situation where 'many critics ground personal axes or exaggerated for effect'.[36] This is potentially significant when considering musical-social networks in London during the period. For example, from 1860 J. W. Davison was married to Arabella Goddard, a regular collaborator of Wilma Norman-Neruda's. It is therefore likely not only that critic and artist knew either other, but that they may well have been part of the same social circle. Relationships like this may well have had the potential to influence critical writings.

Charles Villers Stanford's account of musical criticism at the end of the century highlights how pressure to supply reports quickly affected the quality of writing and engagement. Describing a 'feverish haste with which editors of newspaper insist upon the production of critical notices', Stanford explained that reports were often required within two hours of a concert finishing, in order to be printed 'by cock-crow the next morning'.[37] Stanford made the point that this resulted in reviews written by a critic who might have heard a work for the first time and had to hastily write a review, leading him to conclude that 'to expect the best possible criticism, or indeed criticism of any lasting value at all, under such circumstances is grotesque, and the insistence upon such hot-haste production is a hardship to the writer, an injury to the producer, and a mischief to music.'[38] Leanne Langley's work also highlights the difference between 'morning-after' reviews and more considered critical discussions, "'Morning-after" performance-reviewing–which calls for quick

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[32] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

[33] Stanford, 'Some Aspects of Musical Criticism in England', 829.

[34] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 590-91.

[35] Leanne Langley, 'Criticism, § II, 3 (i) To 1890', *Grove Music Online*.

[36] Bashford, 'The Late Beethoven Quartets', 93.

[37] Stanford, 'Some Aspects of Musical Criticism in England', 826-827.

[38] Ibid., 827.

reactions, a certain technical emphasis, and rather plan narrative writing–is a quite different thing from either genuine musical criticism or great imaginative literature.'[39]

This critical context posed challenges in using the source material, mainly concerning the anonymous nature of reviews, critics' agendas or levels of knowledge and differentiating between lack of engagement and journalistic practices. In particular, differing critical perspectives on a performance may not necessarily have been reflective of the performance, but may instead have reflect the reviewer's knowledge, taste, or personal-political agenda. Meanwhile, an apparent lack of critical engagement with a performance might have actually been more attributable to short editorial deadlines, conventions, or requirements relating to length and detail. For this reason, in the researching of this project, a large number of reviews and concert notices were read in order to gain a sense of overarching trends and themes within reviews of specific artists or concerts, trying to avoid extrapolating too much from individual reviews, and signposting any outliers which were included as part of my discussion. This approach was also designed to minimise any inadvertent citing of the same anonymised author. While, perhaps inevitably, this may not have been wholly achieved, my hope is that a broad enough range of sources have been considered in the researching of this project that many of the challenges posed by the source materials will have been circumvented through this approach.

Scope

In the course of writing and researching this thesis, some natural parameters – such as geographical and linguistic limitations – around the size and scope of the project emerged, while other aspects of the research, such as the historical period under examination, required more considered thought in relation to the limits set on the discussion.

Time period

As with any large-scale research project of this kind, defining the historical parameters proved challenging. The first women violinists were admitted to the Royal Academy of Music in 1872, which formed a logical end-point for this research; although female players still faced issues around their reception and acceptance for several decades after this point, their admittance for formal study of the instrument was a significant hurdle that had been overcome. Although the thesis was originally intended to explore the period from the start of the nineteenth century, the activities of Louise Gautherot and Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen in the closing decades of the eighteenth

[39] Langley, 'The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England', 591.

century, and the absence of any high-profile women violinists between this and the arrival of the Milanollo sisters in the 1830s–40s resulted in an expansion of the time period under focus, in order to give a more thorough exploration of the issues at play.

Geographical parameters

Although all of the women violinists featured in the case studies in this thesis came from Continental Europe, this thesis primarily focuses on their playing activities and reception in the United Kingdom, and mainly England and London within this. There are three central reasons for this approach. The first is the issue of scale; geographical parameters were needed in order to keep the work at a manageable and realistic size. The second relates to the practical challenges of identifying, locating and accessing primary source materials such as original advertisements, reviews and historical records, as a wealth of surviving English material exists and is readily accessible. Finally, and most importantly, is the issue of language; a native (or near native) level of language is needed in order to successfully interpret and understand the nuances of the language used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reviews; this limited the study to English-language reviews. While American reviews could also have been explored, the differences between American and English musical culture during the period would have necessitated further contextual research which would fall beyond the scope of this thesis. While much of the focus of this work therefore relates to the London concert scene, limiting the scope of the thesis specifically to London would have eliminated useful material on women violinists' important activities outside of the capital, such as Teresa Milanollo's tour of the west country with Bochsa and Norman-Neruda's concerts in Manchester and Liverpool. I have adopted Meirion Hughes' approach to terminology, 'using "English", rather than "British", music is preferred because the Victorians and Edwardians tended not to use the 'British' adjective in cultural matters'.[40]

Instruments

As outlined above, for much of the nineteenth century, women's instrumental music making was confined to the piano, harp and guitar. It was therefore not only the stringed family of instruments affected by perceptions of appropriate instruments for women, and few women played instruments from the brass, woodwind and percussion families. The issues around these instruments – for example, relating to distortion of the face when blowing – were distinct from those surrounding the playing of stringed instruments by women during the nineteenth century. Furthermore, objections to women playing wind and brass instruments took longer to overcome; whereas the

[40] Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press*, 1.

violin family became more acceptable for women to play during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, objections to wind and brass instruments persisted into the twentieth. Distinctions also existed within the violin family; the viola did not become established as a solo instrument in its own right until the twentieth century; consequently there is minimal documentation of women violists during the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, objections to female cello playing took longer to overcome than those relating to the violin, in part, due to the additional issues around its playing position. Only one female cellist, Lisa Cristiani (1827–1853) is known to have played during the first half of the nineteenth century, but it was not until its closing decades that subsequent players appeared, including May Mukle (1880–63), Guilhermina Suggia (1885–1950) and Beatrice Harrison (1892–1965). For the reasons outlined above, this project therefore focuses exclusively on the violin; further work on the cello and wind instruments would make a valuable addition to the existing literature, but are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Terminology

'Performance' vs. 'playing'

Both 'performance' and 'playing' are used to refer to music-making throughout this work. My intention is that 'performance' implies some public element, which might range from an informal audience within the home to the concert stage, whereas 'playing' is more fluid, and might also encompass more private or casual music-making. As the central case-study chapters of this work focus on the public appearances of professional female violinists , 'performance' and 'playing', both 'playing' and 'performance' adequately describe their activities and are used fairly interchangeably throughout.

'Artist' vs. 'virtuoso'

Finally, some explanation is included here as to how the reader should understand the use of 'artist' and 'virtuoso' in the discussions of the six women violinist case studies and the sources consulted within these. Nineteenth-century sources often made use of the term 'artist' when discussing solo musicians (of both genders), and it is likewise used interchangeably throughout this thesis alongside 'performer', 'player' and 'violinist'. My use of 'virtuoso' is slightly more nuanced, and intended to indicate the high level at which the six women who form the case studies were performing.[41] However, any alternation between these two terms when discussing the six case

[41] Owen Jander, 'Virtuoso,' *Grove Music Online*. 2001.

studies is intended only to avoid repetition for the reader, and is not typically intended as any form of value judgement between them.

Chapter 1:

Notions of virtuosity, female accomplishment, and the violin 'ban' at the turn of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries.

The origins of objections to female violinists, which were in evidence at least until the end of the nineteenth century, were complex. Nineteenth-century discourse on the 'prejudice' – or effective social prohibition – predominantly cited aesthetic objections to women playing the violin. However, recent literature has explored more subtle underlying causes, including the homoerotic connotations of women playing an instrument ascribed as female, and the violin's occult links. I propose another underlying reason for the prohibition: the conflict between nineteenth-century ideas on virtuosity and the narrow parameters of what was thought to constitute 'appropriate' female performance. The violin was a popular instrument for many of the male virtuoso-composer performers who toured Europe and visited Britain. The careers of Tartini in the eighteenth century and Paganini at the dawn of the nineteenth – who both used previously unseen tricks and technical feats, pushing instrument and performer to their limits – firmly established the violin as a virtuoso instrument in the public imagination. The violin was a central component of nineteenth-century musical life, and a string of celebrated virtuoso soloists passed through London, including de Bériot, Ernst, Vieuxtemps and Joachim. However, ideas regarding 'correct' female performance were strict; the display of virtuosity was incompatible with the style in which women were expected to play, and ideas about female intellectual capacity also deemed them unsuitable to play technically challenging repertoire and instruments, effectively barring them from playing the violin. This chapter explores the conflict between nineteenth-century ideas on women's intellectual capacity and virtuosity. Factors preventing women from fulfilling the virtuoso-composer model are examined alongside a discussion of music as 'accomplishment' and how this rendered the violin a socially unsuitable instrument for women.

The female realm

The nineteenth-century preoccupation with gender roles was reflected in the publication of numerous books and essays on female education, etiquette and behaviour published during the period. Despite many of these dispensing advice on learning music and 'correct' modes of performance, few publications explicitly discussed the culture of socially proscribed instruments.

Some allusions were made; Eleanor Geary's *Musical Education* asserted that 'The three principal instruments which the sanction of custom allots to female performers are, the piano-forte, harp, and guitar', and Elizabeth Appleton's *Private Education* listed the prescribed instruments for women as being pianoforte, pedal harp, and voice.[1] Explicit counselling against playing particular instruments was unusual; most texts did not make any reference to the culture of proscribed instruments and instead provide evidence of the prohibition through their failure to discuss any form of women's music-making beyond keyboard instruments, singing and occasional mentions of the harp or guitar. Rita Steblin suggests that 'gender division between instruments reflected the roles of the sexes in society: the men (soloists or leaders) held the positions of power while the women (accompanists or followers) did as they were told – were subservient'.[2] Consequently, a woman taking up a virtuosic instrument such as the violin would have disrupted both musical and social norms, and openly challenged the allocated roles of the sexes. Contemporary literature also indicates that this gender division extended to male players; Parke remarked of a famous male harp player, 'There is something repulsive in a gigantic sort of a personage like Mr. Bochsa playing on so feminine an instrument as the harp, whose strings, in my opinion, should only be made to vibrate by the delicate fingers of the ladies.'[3] Meanwhile, several sources also reported an Oxford undergraduate audience hissing a male pianist off the stage in 1830.[4] By contrast, Parke refers to male musicians playing the flute, cornet, trumpet, oboe, clarinet, violoncello and violin, which all appear to have been relatively unproblematic.[5] This gender divide was in evidence until at least as late as 1847, when *The Fine Arts Journal* published an article arguing that male pianism was encroaching on the female realm, with the result that women were taking up 'male' instruments:

> The little Milanollos would not have applied themselves to the violin, Mlle. Meyer would not have played the flute, Mlle. Christiani the violoncello; nor should we have to

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[1] Eleanor Margaret Geary, *Musical education; with practical observations on the art of piano-forte playing,* (London, 1851), 75 and Elizabeth Appleton, *Private Education or a Practical Plan for the Studies of Young Ladies* (London: Henry Colburn, 1815), 135.

[2] Rita Steblin, "The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments in the Western Tradition," *Canadian University Music Review* 16/1 (1995), 138. The article under discussion is Carl Ludwig Junker "Vom Kostüm des Frauenzimmer Spielens," *Musikalischer Almanach auf das Jahr 1784* (Freiburg, [1784]), 85-99.

[3] William Thomas Parke, *Musical Memoirs : Comprising an Account of the General State of Music in England, from the First Commemoration of Handel, in 1784, to the Year 1830. Interspersed with Numerous Anecdotes, Musical, Histrionic, &c.* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), vol. 1, 183.

[4] Explored further in Nicholas Temperley, 'Domestic Music in England 1800-1860,' *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 85 (1958), 31-47.

[5] Parke, *Musical memoirs,* 189-90.

> announce the approaching *debût* of a girl of twelve years, to whom her father has taught the trombone! What's to be done? You have no right to blame these children. You have taken away their piano, and they have deprived you of your clarionettes, your contrebasses, and your orphicleides. You may call this the liberty of art, but we denounce it as anarchy.[6]

Musical instruments were therefore innately linked to nineteenth-century gender hierarchy and roles; if men gave up the piano, social order would be restored. For a woman to take up the violin at this time would disrupt not only musical, but social norms, openly challenging the roles of the sexes.

Education

Music, and the piano in particular, played a key role in upper and upper-middle class nineteenth-century female life from early childhood, to the extent that as late 1871, H. R. Haweis was able to remark that 'A girl's education is as much based on the pianoforte as a boy's is on the Latin grammar'.[7] Most girls had daily lessons; Appleton's *Private Education* recommended an hour's lesson per day, with an additional hour that might be used for maintaining older repertoire.[8] Appleton cautioned against learning more than one instrument, asserting that 'It is impossible to find time for both, consequently, neither is ever well understood.'[9]

The ubiquity of female musical education is evidenced by the large amount of pedagogical music books published in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries, most of which were written for the piano and the violin. Elizabeth Morgan's work on the subject notes that 'While they were designed for use in conjunction with lessons from a music master or governess, often these books appeared almost to take the place of a teacher.'[10] This has interesting implications for the prohibition on violin playing; it suggests that in theory, women could have taught themselves the violin, yet this does not seem to have been the case, and is perhaps indicative of the strength of social norms regarding 'appropriate' instruments.

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[6] [Unsigned] 'The Pianoforte Mania,' *The Fine arts journal* 1/12 (23 Jan 1847), 188.

[7] Hugh Reginald Haweis. *Music and Morals* (London: Strahan & Co., 1871), 525.

[8] Appleton, *Private Education,* 160-1.

[9] Ibid., 162.

[10] Elizabeth Natalie Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa: Women at the Pianoforte and in England 1780-1820.' (PhD diss., University of California, 2009), 25.

Music lessons would often take place with the family governess, who would provide basic tuition. The alternative was employing a music master, which demonstrated wealth and social prestige, and offered a higher level of accomplishment to the student. However, this was not without issue, as music masters were exclusively male, and Morgan highlights an element of social unease about young women refining their arsenal of accomplishments intended for the marriage market under the 'male gaze' of a working musician:

> The relationship between master and pupil was undoubtedly an intimate one, centered on the young woman's awareness of her body and the male teacher's reception thereof. While British society sanctioned the presentation of feminine accomplishment as sacraments of foreplay, it didn't intend for the male gaze at hand to belong to a man who was, by any acceptable standard, all manner of social abominations: a member of the lower class, a working man, a male musician, a foreigner [many were Italian]. Even more shocking was the possibility that young women might return his gaze.[11]

The conflict between the prestige of employing a music master and the perils of leaving one's daughter alone with him consequently generated a significant level of anxiety in the upper echelons of society. The practical step of finding a suitable teacher to learn from would therefore have provided an immediate obstacle for any young woman who wished to learn the violin, an instrument not taught by governesses.

Music as accomplishment

Music was one of a number of 'accomplishments' that young ladies of the upper and upper-middle classes were expected to attain. Nineteenth-century etiquette manuals indicate a range of motivations for being musically accomplished. Maria and Richard Edgeworth's *Practical Education* lays out the 'value' of accomplishments in the main:

> They are tickets of admission to fashionable company ... they are supposed to increase a young lady's chance of a prize in the matrimonial lottery. Accomplishments also have a value as resources against *ennui*, as they afford continual amusement and innocent occupation.[12]

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[11] Ibid., 139.

[12] Maria Edgeworth and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Essays on Practical Education* (London: Printed for J. Johnson. 1815). 174.

As early as the eighteenth century, the anonymous author of *Euterpe* suggested similar motivations for young women to learn music, with an additional moral element:

> To amuse their own family, and for that domestic comfort, they were by Providence designed to promote; – to relieve the anxieties and cares of life, to inspire cheerfulness, and elevate the mind to a sense and love of Order, – Virtue, – and Religion.[13]

These themes are also found in Parke's *Musical Memoirs*, which again highlights the moral benefits of music:

> By [music] forming a predominant feature in the education of the female sex, it engages their attention, and delights their minds by its fascinations, till the judgement is sufficiently matured to enable them to fix their destinies in life with a fair prospect of happiness...by mixing in polite assemblies, and listening to the charms of music, which soothes pain, and keeps vice at a distance, young men may be estranged from the gaming-table and other demoralising scenes, which seldom fail to entail fatal consequences on their votaries.[14]

Other nineteenth-century publications reflect the same themes; music as an accomplishment was regarded as a force for social and moral good, keeping young ladies occupied and providing suitable entertainment for young men. Piano playing in particular was a useful social tool, which formed part of a raft of accomplishments intended to attract suitors, and which also operated as a form of social currency; Morgan highlights the crucial role that music took in Georgian and Regency era courtship:

> As a ritual of courtship, it was corporeal, an activity that permitted men to gaze longingly at women's bodies for many minutes at a time...Certain physical positions that a pianist might adopt...were alive with sexual meaning: outstretched arms highlighting a woman's sternum and frequent hand crossings pushing her breasts together....Empire-waisted gowns were ubiquitous in women's fashion, their low-cut necklines

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[13] [Unsigned] *Euterpe; Or Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music As Part of Modern Education* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, c.1778), 18-19.

[14] Parke, *Musical memoirs,* 102-103.

> accentuating the female busom....Meanwhile, keyboard repertoire abounding with cleavage-enhancing hand crossings flourished on the amateur music market.[15]

Morgan's point is supported by the fact that many women gave up playing music after marriage. *Essays on Practical Education* lamented that 'As soon as a young lady is married, does she not frequently discover, that "she really has not *leisure* to cultivate talents which take up so much time."....What motive has she for perseverance?'[16] The idea of courtship as a key motive for music-making has particular implications. Life as an unmarried woman was financially and socially precarious, and adhering to the social conventions around musical performance, including instrument choice, would have been important in attracting appropriate suitors. It is therefore understandable that many women might have limited their performances to the keyboard, rather than exploring instruments such as the violin. Elizabeth Morgan's work also highlights the role of accomplishments in maintaining the prevalent social structure:

> Embedded in the accomplishment system was the somewhat paradoxical notion that through female education, society could keep control over women and maintain its patriarchal structure... In other words, by occupying women within the domestic setting, female activities prevented women from averting their attention from the private sphere.[17]

Performance of virtuoso repertoire or on virtuoso instruments would have disrupted this model and by extension, challenged the patriarchal structure of society, their attention diverted beyond the private sphere of the home.

Although music-making was expected of young ladies, its function was not to be the centre of attention, but rather to form part of a requisite backdrop for social interaction and contribute some of the general entertainment in company. Ladies were expected to take their turn at providing the amusement, and were warned both against refusing to perform or monopolising the piano for an entire evening, as Jane Austen has Mary Bennett doing throughout the first half of *Pride and Prejudice*. The writer of *A Legacy of Affection, Advice and Instruction* writes:

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[15] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 122-3.

[16] Edgeworth & Edgeworth, *Essays on Practical Education,* 175-176.

[17] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 7.

> I scarcely know which is a greater annoyance to those who meet to make each other happy for the time, the young lady who gets possession of a piano-forte, and, fond of hearing her own voice, bores a company for an entire evening, or another who resists invitation for half an hour, then plays and sings admirably for another half hour, before she will again condescend. While you are learning music, you should always bear in mind that it is a social science, that its object is to please.[18]

Haweis *Music and Morals* illustrates the socially acceptable mode of performance in the following narrative:

> Let us enter the drawing-room after dinner. The daughter of our hostess is rattling away at the keys, and quite ready for a chat at the same time; if conversation comes her way, she can leave the bass out, or invent one, as it is only the "Sonate Pathétique." She has long passed the conscientious stage, when an indifferent or careless performance caused her the least anxiety. She plays her fantasia now as lightly as she rings the bell, not for its own sake, but because it is time for the gentlemen to come up, or for the ladies to begin a little small talk, or for somebody to make love. When she gets up, another sits down, and continues to provide that indispensable stimulant to conversation called "a little music." [19]

These accomplishments were not to be learned with the goal of professionalism – they were a means through which to acquire the tools of life. Maria Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies* provides insight into the intentions and aspirations for the female skill-set, and the limits placed on it, 'I do not desire to make my daughter a musician, a painter, or a poetess; I do not desire to make her a botanist, a mathematician, or a chemist; but I wish to give her the habit of industry and attention, the love of knowledge and the power of reasoning.'[20]

Accomplishments were therefore not to be learned with the goal of professionalism, rather, they were a means through which to learn the tools of life. A woman would be expected to run and organise her household after marriage, and the 'habit of industry and attention' alludes to this,

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[18] [Unsigned] *A Legacy of Affection, Advice and Instruction* (London: Printed for Poole and Edwards, 1827), 121-2.

[19] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 529.

[20] Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for literary ladies: To which is added, an essay on the noble science of self-justification* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1795), 73-74.

as well as suggesting the capability to keep herself busy while her husband was away or occupied. Edgeworth's writing reinforces the function of accomplishments as a productive pastime, with a tacit reminder of their rightful place within the female realm. However, musical accomplishment was not universally regarded as a positive attribute. There was concern from some quarters that excessive accomplishment would lead to vanity and corruption of character. The writers of both an 1831 article in *The Kaleidoscope* entitled 'Female Education' and *Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music As Part of Modern Education* explicitly warned against this, with the former stating that 'There is so much for vanity to feed upon, so much of enchantment, so much of illusion, that delightful as it is I cannot but look upon it as a dangerous accomplishment' and the latter concurring 'she sacrifices at the altar of vanity, and too often becomes ridiculous, by affecting to be *thoroughly accomplished*'.[21]

Navigating aspects of skill level and repertoire choice was crucial; women players had to be competent enough to entertain guests, friends, and suitors, without making a spectacle of themselves. Books on education and etiquette for ladies were keen to highlight both the need for young women to learn music, and the importance of partaking in socially appropriate modes of performance. Most recommended that women should only play well enough to entertain themselves and their social circle, declaring that anything more was likely to fuel vanity:

> Young ladies should play, sing, and dance, only so well as to amuse themselves and their friends, than to practice those arts in so eminent a degree as to astonish the public...as this consists in an exhibition of the person, they are liable to be attended with vanity, and to extinguish the blush of youthful timidity; which is in young ladies the most powerful of their exterior charm.[22]

Similarly, comments from the author of *A Legacy of Affection, Advice and Instruction* on desirable female behaviour also explain why women might not have wanted to present themselves as virtuoso performers, or to draw attention to themselves by playing a non-prescribed instrument:

> The retiring grace, the gentle force, the winning modesty, are the qualities, the true characteristics of our sex....We lose every thing if we assume a boisterous manner, talk

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[21] [Unsigned] 'Female Education,' *The Kaleidoscope* 11.554 (8 February 1831), 251 and [Unsigned] *Euterpe*, 7.

[22] Erasmus Darwin, *A plan for the conduct of female education in boarding schools* (Derby: Printed by J. Drewry for J. Johnson, 1797), 12.

> loud, laugh with the head divided into two ugly parts, and ape the coarsest of the other sex, or the vulgarest of our own.[23]

These remarks were again echoed in Erasmus Darwin's *Plan for the Conduct of Female Education,* which suggests that 'The female character should possess the mild and retiring virtues rather than the bold and dazzling ones'.[24] In the context of these expectations, both repertoire and performance style required careful thought. Music and etiquette books reflected this, and advised playing simple pieces well, rather than attempting more technically challenging music. *Euterpe* offers a classic example:

> Let our daughters then be taught *Music* so as to *understand* what they *perform*, and *perform* no more than what falls within the *easy* compass of their *execution*; nor ever attempt any thing but *select pieces* of *familiar, easy, simple* construction, such as may delight the *ear* of their friends, and contribute to improve their own Hearts by directing its influence to the proper object.[25]

However, while women musicians were expected only to play simple pieces which they were thought capable of understanding, and which would not attract excessive attention, their repertoire choices also had to be substantial enough to avoid being criticised as being trivial or of little artistic value. Appleton's *Private Education* remarks:

> Trifling tunes, and rondos with variations, and songs...are as improper, and as ill calculated, to form the taste to good music, as common story books and novels are to ennoble the style and to raise the mind to dignified and generous views of general literature.[26]

Reasonably proficient women pianists were expected to play repertoire such as Dussek, Cramer, Hummel, Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart, and some sources, including *The Young Lady's Book* (1829,

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[23] [Unsigned] *A Legacy of Affection, Advice and Instruction,* 145-6.

[24] Darwin, *Plan for the conduct of female education,* 12.

[25] [Unsigned] *Euterpe,* 13-14.

[26] Appleton, *Private Education,* 147.

370) also recommended playing chamber music in order to develop musicality.[27] Suggested repertoire included arrangements of Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart.[28] William Cheng's recent work explores a perceived 'infestation' of amateur female pianists in France during the Romantic era, and describes the criticism that young women faced when they played less challenging repertoire:

> Young girls in particular were often derided for their lack of artistic refinement and conceived as metonymically standing for the bourgeois women of all ages who were infantilized as obsessive consumers of amateur music and domestic trinkets. Trivial genres such as the *quadrille* and the romance were seen to suit the limited skill level of women who found little opportunity for formal musical education.[29]

Meanwhile, Morgan's work on women pianists suggests that a compromise was found in the *style galant*, and notes that other popular genres that were considered appropriate repertoire included 'Scottish songs, rondos, accompanied sonatas, and sentimental airs,' which were marketed to women amateurs by publishers and composers.[30] Any woman wishing to play the violin would have faced the same difficulties in navigating appropriate repertoire choices, but without the plethora of educational guidance as to what constituted acceptable pieces of music.

Female intellect

Alongside the rules of social propriety, late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century ideas about women's intelligence also influenced ideas about their capacity for virtuosity, and by extension, their suitability to play an instrument with virtuosic associations such as the violin. The notion of innate differences between male and female brains permeated much discourse during the period, which often concluded that woman could never hope to possess the intellectual power of her male counterparts. A useful discussion of the issue is found in Edgeworth's *Letters for Literary Ladies,* which employs letters between two different characters to express different views of the day. The first letter argues that the female mind is innately inferior to the male mind: 'In the course of my life it has never been my good fortune to meet with a female whose mind, in strength, just

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[27] [Unsigned] *The Young Lady's Book: A Manual of Elegant Recreations, Exercises, and pursuits* (London: Vizetelly, Branston, and Co, 1829), 370.

[28] Ibid.

[29] William Cheng, 'Hearts for Sale: The French Romance and the Sexual Traffic of Musical Mimicry,' *19th-Century Music* 35, no. 1 (2011), 34-71.

[30] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 19.

proportion, and activity, I could compare to that of a sensible man....It is not possible that women should ever be our equals in knowledge'.[31] The responding character's letter describes the changing attitudes to women's attainment: 'Many things, which were thought be to above their comprehension, or unsuited to their sex, have now been found to be perfectly within the compass of their abilities.'[32] Although the second letter reflects gradually changing thought in some quarters about the nature and capabilities of the female brain, treatises on women as creators frequently took a less progressive view.

There was a large faction of late-eighteenth and nineteenth century society which believed in innate differences between the male and female brains, and concluded that a woman could never hope to have the intellectual power of a man. This notional inferiority also created conflict in the realm of aesthetics; where in the Enlightenment period, aesthetic theory had mainly been concerned with taste, Romantic aesthetic theories held that the successful virtuoso performer had to have sufficient genius to interpret the composer's intention and deliver a faithful performance. Mary Hunter writes that this required 'the performer's psycho-spiritual capacity to transform himself into an other', and that this 'was seen as an essential element of performative genius'.[33] Hunter offers several examples of this new performance philosophy, including the following passage from Hegel's *Aesthetics*, which she describes as characterising early Romantic thought about genius and the performer:

> He must submit himself entirely to the character of the work and intend only to be an obedient instrument. The executant has a duty, rather than giving the impression of an automaton ... to give life and soul to the work in the same sense that the composer did.... *genius* can consist solely in actually reaching in the reproduction of the spiritual height of the composer and then bringing it to life.[34]

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[31] Edgeworth, *Letters for literary ladies,* 5-6.

[32] Ibid., 64-65.

[33] Mary Hunter, '"To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer": The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58/2 (Summer 2005), 370.

[34] George Wilhelm Hegel, 'Die künstlerische Execution,' in *Vorlesungen über die Äesthetic*, in vol. 3 of his *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986) 219-20. [Original German] quoted in Hunter, '"To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer"', 362.

Ideas about differences between the male and female brain were also seen in treatises on women as creators, which offer clues about thought on women's intellectual fitness for a virtuoso career, as found in Haweis' *Music and Morals*:

> The originative faculty is usually considered more heaven-born, as it is certainly far more rare than the executive gift. Few women have hitherto possessed the first, numbers have attained the highest rank in the second. [35]
>
> ...
>
> The woman's temperament is naturally artistic, not in a creative, but in a receptive, sense. A woman seldom writes good music, never great music...Most women reflect with astonishing ease, and it has often been remarked that they have more perception than thought, more passion than judgment, more generosity than justice, and more religious sentiment than moral taste.'[36]

Haweis cited the lack of female composers in support of his argument that women's deficiencies in intellectual faculty rendered them more suitable as interpreters than creators. Arguments such as that of Haweis reinforced the preclusion of women from composition, harmony and counterpoint classes at conservatoires until the latter part of the nineteenth century, limiting their opportunities to learn the requisite skills for composition, musical theory (including harmony and counterpoint), or advanced musical interpretation. Within the world of composition, women were cast in the role of muse rather than creator; as Nancy Reich remarks, 'the nineteenth-century woman who defied convention by attempting creative work was presumed to be "unwomanly"'[37]

These ideas about the limits of female intelligence had a two-fold impact on the scope and scale of female performance. Firstly, as discussed in *Euterpe,* it placed limits on the repertoire women could be thought to 'understand' and successfully perform. Secondly, it barred them from the traditional model of the virtuoso-composer, modelled in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by Chopin, Thalberg and Liszt on the piano, and numerous players including Tartini, Paganini, Joachim, Vieuxtemps and De Bériot on the violin. If a woman could not be a creator of great musical ideas, she could not fit the composer-virtuoso model.

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[35] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 62-3.

[36] Haweis, *Music and Morals*,112-3.

[37] Nancy B. Reich 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,' in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 133-4.

Of course, some women did make names for themselves as piano virtuosi. However, their careers were not without issue. Katherine Ellis' work on women pianists in nineteenth-century Paris particularly highlights the conflict caused by the virtuoso-composer model. Ellis remarks that 'to critics who clung to older models of the composer-virtuoso ... women could never qualify as top-flight artists'.[38] Ellis cites Oscar Comettant's 1861 article for *L'Art musical,* which ranks pianists thus: 'At the top of the hierarch..."the virtuoso who composes"; second, "the virtuoso who does not compose"...third, "the *fingerless* virtuoso, otherwise known as the Classical pianist"; fourth, "the accompanist."'[39] As women musicians had limited opportunities for formal training in composition, harmony and counterpoint, according to Comettant's model, they would be forever prevented from reaching the top echelons of virtuoso performance. While Ellis' work specifically focuses on female pianists, these ideas about the virtuoso-composer would have applied equally to women violinists; many of the leading male players during the nineteenth century conformed to this model, including Paganini, Wieniawski, Vieuxtemps and Spohr.

Women also sang professionally, and there were dozens of virtuosic prima donnas on the London opera stage during the period; Gillett remarks that 'The women musicians best known to the English public were, without question, singers.'[40] Like the female violinists discussed in this thesis, many of these women were foreign and were 'related to professional musicians or actors and continued the family tradition as a matter of course', and were expected to quit the stage when they married.[41] However, the appearance of women prima donnas on the English stage was not without issue, and many of the objections levelled at them tied into broader concerns about virtuosity and moral values. George Biddlecombe's work describes a nineteenth-century perception of prima donnas that they 'paid scant respect to the mores of the British public and pursued lifestyles marked by vast incomes and dubious morals, all compounded by their foreignness'.[42] However, this appears to have been underpinned by an appealing glamour, as Roberta Montemorra Marvin has explained:

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[38] Katharine Ellis, 'Female Pianists and Their Male Critics in Nineteenth-Century Paris,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 50/2-3 (Summer-Autumn 1997), 384.

[39] Ibid., 381.

[40] Paula Gillett, Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on all man's privileges" (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 141.

[41] Nancy B. Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1890', in Women & Music: A History, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 165.

[42] George Biddlecombe, 'Jenny Lind, Illustration, Song and the Relationship Between Prima Donna and Public,' in *The Idea of Art Music in a Commercial World, 1800-1930*, ed. Christina Bashford and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 86.

> Artists of the (international) operatic stage….were considered cosmopolitan stars, for the works they performed were in other languages, allowing them to enjoy success in an international arena. This worldliness surely gave them a certain cachet, but their peripatetic lifestyle also made them suspect for defying womanly norms.[43]

The situation for virtuosic prima donnas therefore seems to have been rather more complex than that for female instrumentalists. While they appear to have encountered objections and some prejudice, this was clearly a very viable career for many women. Like the piano, the voice was one of the few socially acceptable vehicles for women's music-making in the first half of the nineteenth-century, and, it is likely that, being a natural instrument, intrinsic to the body, vocal practice would have been harder to police than instrumental playing.

Nineteenth-century violin method books illustrate how broader discussions around the nature of the 'artist' and 'genius' specifically related to violin playing. Method books by eminent teachers of the day such as Rode, Baillot, Kreutzer and Spohr not only discussed the technical aspects of playing, but also featured recurrent discussions around the attributes and nature of the player, many of which were antithetical to ideas about the nature and scope of the female musician.

These books demonstrate a preoccupation with the nature of 'genius', for example Rode, Baillot and Kreutzer's *Method of Instruction for the violin* declared that 'Genius, that heavenly gift, which is infused into man at his birth, is, in the fine arts, accompanied by an exquisite feeling and a strong intellect, by which is it impelled to overleap the bounds by which it appears circumscribed.'[44] While women players might be thought to have the requisite 'exquisite feeling', the 'strong intellect' required of the 'genius' player would have precluded women from this category, intellect being an attribute not generally encouraged in the female sex; consequently the 'circumscription' of being female was not a 'bound' which was generally 'overleap[t]'. The explicit assumption of the player as male is also worth noting; a similar example appeared in Spohr's *Violin School,* the opening pages of which referred to ascertaining 'whether a boy possesses talent for music or not.'[45]

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[43] Roberta Montemorra Marvin, 'Idealizing the Prima Donna in Mid-Victorian London,' in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century,* ed. Rachel Cowgill & Hilary Poriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23-24.

[44] Pierre Rode, Pierre Baillot, and Rodolphe Kreutzer, *Rode, Baillot and Kreutzer's Method of Instruction for the violin. Translated from the original edition* (London: T. Boosey and co. London, 1823), 2.

[45] Louis Spohr, *Louis Spohr's celebrated Violin School,* trans. John Bishop (London. R. Cocks & Co., c.1843), i.

The relationship between performer and composer was a recurrent theme. Louis Spohr's *Celebrated Violin School* explained:

> By *style* or *delivery* is signified the manner in which the singer or player performs what has been invented and written down by the composer. Thus, if confined to a faithful rendering of the same, as expressed by notes, signs and technical terms, is called a *correct style:* but if the performer, by additions of his own, be capable of intellectually animating the work, so that the hearer may be led to understand and participate in the intentions of the composer, it is termed a *fine style*, in which correctness, feeling and elegance, are equally united....The whole doctrine of fine style is however, confined to this:–namely, the capability of discerning the character of the piece performed, and of seizing its predominating expression and transfusing the same into the performance. This, which elevates a *correct* to a *fine* style, is entirely a natural gift, which may indeed be awakened and cultivated, but can never be taught.[46]

Like Rode, Baillot and Kreutzer, Spohr presents genius as being innate, describing a higher level of performance, with the performer ascending to the intellectual plane of the composer, fully realising and transmitting the composer's intention and vision in their performance. Rode, Baillot and Kretuzer took a similar view of the role of the performer in communicating the composer's ideas:

> Genius…by a sudden inspiration becomes identified with the genius of the composer, follows all his ideas, and imparts them with facility and precision...In short, it is the province of genius to revive the sublime works of the great masters, and to present them to its contemporaries in all their glory and majesty.[47]

These method books illustrate that the broader discourse around intellect, interpretation and the role of the performer in relation to the composer did not just take place as abstract discussions in scholarly or musical journals; within violin-playing, they were part of the very fabric of musical pedagogy. If debates around women's capacity to successfully understand, interpret and communicate the ideas of (male) composers were abundant in the wider musical world, these sources suggest that women would have found these ideas about their limitations inescapable within the realm of violin study.

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[46] Spohr, *Violin School,* 181.

[47] Rode, Baillot & Kreutzer, *Method of Instruction for the violin,* 21-22.

Musical culture and virtuosity

The nineteenth century was a period of significant change in the musical world, especially regarding notions of virtuosity. Nicholas Temperley's work explains, 'At the beginning of the century there was really only one type of concert, the 'Grand Miscellaneous Selection'. It consisted of about four hours of orchestral music, concertos, and vocal extracts from operas and oratorios.[48] Most concerts were structured along these lines, and private concerts at aristocratic houses, featuring the fashionable Italian singers of the season, followed roughly the same format. In aristocratic circles, concerts had formed an important part of the social season; Temperley gives several examples of complaints about audiences talking throughout performances and paints a very different picture from concerts today:

> Early nineteenth-century illustrations of concerts show the audience looking around, talking, and even walking about, in a manner totally different from the rapt concentration that is the custom at concerts to-day. Moreover, it seems that very few people ever attended the whole of a concert....The last item in a concert, usually an overture of symphony, was regarded merely as the signal for departure, and was described as "playing the audience out".[49]

However, where aristocratic tastes had previously dominated, the middle-classes increasingly influenced public taste through the nineteenth century, and this shift in audience demographic influenced the type of concerts on offer, as the middle-classes gained increasing influence in tastes and attitudes. Throughout the nineteenth century, concerts diversified, becoming increasingly specialist, and the solo recital became a staple of the musical season around the 1830s–50s:

> A profound change came over English concert life. It began to take on its modern shape, in which every species of music is represented by its own concert. Music that had hitherto existed largely for performance in the home or in small clubs, such as

[48] Temperley, 'Domestic Music in England', 32-3.

[49] Nicholas N Temperley, 'Instrumental Music in England 1800-1850,.' (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1959), 9.

> glees and part-songs, solo songs with keyboard as accompaniment, and instrumental music for solo or small ensemble, suddenly entered the arena of the public concert.[50]

This marked a new, 'virtuoso' era, with increased numbers of solo recitals and chamber music concerts._Interestingly fashion for the piano sonata waned somewhat during this period, but revived again from around 1850. The solo instruments that appeared regularly at concerts were the violin, flute, cello and horn: the instruments predominantly played by men.

Following this period, there was a shift in attitude to virtuosity across Europe between 1750 and the latter half of the nineteenth century, which coincided with the changes in concert life. Gooley describes a backlash against the virtuoso in the 1850s, concurrent with the rise of the symphony, and an increasing democratisation of the musical world.[51] This partly came about from a wider concern about the greater societal good, and a notion that the virtuoso performer was necessarily afflicted by egotism and vanity. Gooley describes a 'perception that modernity was characterized by a crass materialism, and that virtuosos epitomized it.'[52]

Gooley sees one of the first examples of the 'antagonism between virtuosity and "serious" musical values' in the Philharmonic Society of London, formed in 1813. The Philharmonic's founding charter was based on egalitarian principles, and laid out its intentions to only play symphonic repertoire, refusing to produce instrumental or vocal solo performances.[53] Temperley describes the philosophical approach of the Philharmonic:

> For the first time, the cream of London's professional instrumentalists were united in one band. The new feeling of professional solidarity was seen in one of the laws of the society, which laid down that 'there shall not be any distinction of rank in the orchestra, and therefore the station of every performer shall be absolutely determined by the leader of the night.' [54]

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[50] Temperley, 'Domestic Music in England 1800-1860', 34. There is some disagreement over the dates of this period; some sources have it as 1830-40, others 1840-50.

[51] Dana Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity in the Early Nineteenth Century,' in *Franz Liszt and His World,* eds. Christopher H. Gibbs and Dana Gooley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006), 77.

[52] Ibid., 96-7.

[53] Ibid., 78.

[54] Temperley, 'Instrumental Music in England', 35.

The idea was that the Symphony acted as the ultimate socio-musical leveller. However, this strict egalitarian philosophy did not entirely work in practice, and the rules were relaxed somewhat after the first couple of months, with solo concertos appearing regularly in programmes and a higher rate of pay for visiting virtuoso performers.[55] By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Grand Miscellaneous Concert had disappeared, replaced with more specific concerts, tailored to each genre. The rapidly expanding musical press also reflected this change and anti-virtuosic sentiment. However, Gooley notes that 'The battle against virtuosity...proceeded at different tempos in different places–earlier and more vehement in London, Leipzig, and Berlin than in Paris, Vienna, or St. Petersburg.'[56] Most of the extended discussions on virtuosity took place in the German-speaking press, and a series of extended Socratic essays on virtuosity appeared in German periodicals around 1840, discussing social, ethical and aesthetic values and their relationship to virtuosity.[57] Both Elizabeth Morgan and Dana Gooley reflect that critical reactions in England did not tend to explicitly address 'virtuosity', and this is attributed to a difference in discussion style; outside of Germany, discussions of virtuosity took place in more general reviews or articles.[58]

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, etiquette and books for ladies placed great emphasis on the importance of women playing simple repertoire in an appropriately modest fashion, without drawing attention to themselves. The anti-virtuosity movement played on broadly the same aspects of music-making, and nineteenth-century concerns about vanity, materialism and ego in the inherent nature of the virtuoso are also likely to have shaped ideas about appropriate musical roles for women. Late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought appeared to hold music in two contradictory lights. On the one hand, music was thought to have a moral benefit; the author of *Euterpe* described the link between music and morals in late-eighteenth century thought, influenced by the Greek Philosophers: *'Plutarch* tells us, that a man who has learned *Music* from his youth, will ever after have a proper sense of *right* and *wrong,* and an habitual persuasion to *decorum*.'[59] Haweis concurred, remarking that 'the region of Art has everywhere points of contact with the region of Morals'.[60] On the other hand, there was clearly concern about the immorality of the virtuoso performer.

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[55] Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity', 79.

[56] Ibid., 77.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 25.

[59] [Unsigned] *Euterpe,* 2-3.

[60] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 41.

Dana Gooley's work on virtuosity discusses the writings of Triest and Gollmick, and argues that part of the anti-virtuosity feeling in the nineteenth century was rooted in the idea that music 'is an art whose ethical purpose...can only be served by virtuous performers,' which was not compatible with the perception of the virtuoso performers of the time.[61] Gooley particularly highlights Triest's list of the virtuoso's 'immoral characteristics', including 'lack of modesty, strange moodiness, and an addiction to sensual indulgences such as gambling, women, and drink.' [62] Gollmick's 'Virtuosity Today' (1842) concurred, but made a distinction between the 'solid' and travelling virtuoso, the former being modest, with naturally developed, healthy virtuosity, which 'serves an inner god'. The latter 'is hopelessly divorced from his roots...[a] Faustian sell-out to international fashion, the healthy relationship between artistic purpose and personal character falls apart.'[63] This is echoed in Haweis's *Music and Morals,* which asserts that, 'The life of a successful singer or an illustrious instrumentalist is full of peril–peril to virtue, peril to art, peril to society.'[64] The characterisation of the virtuoso in the nineteenth-century imagination was dark and corrupted, driven by an addiction to the sensual and forbidden, with a total disregard for any moral code – the antithesis of everything that women were meant to be, and this partly explains why so many treatises warn against over-accomplishment and virtuosity.

Haweis was of the opinion that each individual should act '*according to his special gifts and capacities*, directed in such a way as to respect and promote the healthful activity of society in general.'[65] This would fit with the importance placed on women to conform to gender roles, staying within the realms of their 'natural' capacity in order for society to function 'healthily'. Haweis continued:

> As a rule, women have been far more valued by society for their personal virtue than for their gifts; and as an eminent writer has observed, society condones in men certain offences which it deems almost unpardonable in women, because it values men, and needs them for their intellectual, imaginative, or administrative powers quite independently of their morals.[66]

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[61] Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity', 89.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Haweis, *Music and Morals,* 67.

[65] Ibid., 42.

[66] Ibid., 85.

Haweis' unexpectedly insightful view of the situation describes the crux of the issue of virtuosity for women: moral conduct was a woman's primary attribute in her social standing. Although men could afford to demonstrate virtuosity at risk of losing moral standing, women could not. *The Young Lady's Book* makes a similar point: 'accomplishments, however desirable and attractive, must always be considered as secondary objects, when compared with those virtues which form the character and influence the power of woman in society'.[67]

The anti-virtuosic movement was also in part a product of the nineteenth-century conflict between public and private:

> It was constantly marking and policing a boundary between a privileged inner self and a devalued "performativity" construed as external and lacking in substance....Critics advocated the inner self against the outer world not only for performers but also for the audiences: suspicion that middle-class audiences only went to concerts to show themselves, to see and be seen, was rampant, and it was far stronger for audiences at virtuoso concerts than at symphony concerts. [68]

The concerns of the anti-virtuosic movement related to broadly the same themes found in discussions about women's music making, particularly the negative consequences arising from the elevation of the individual. In conjunction with treading a careful line between playing 'meaningful' repertoire and being advised by instructional literature to conform to ideals of appropriately modest performance, it is likely that women were also hesitant to undertake displays of excessively skilled performance for fear of their character, morals and virtue being called into question. Katherine Ellis highlights Rousseau's criticism of actresses in *Lettre à M. d'Alembert,* which 'provided all the ingredients for later concerns about the sexual availability of a woman performing in public... [pitting] female modesty and domesticity (the true, natural woman) against female display (the aberrant woman).'[69]

Where piano playing had an entrenched role in domestic music making, away from the concert stage – with an established, socially sanctioned domestic repertoire – the violin had no such respectable alter-ego, or sanctioned repertory to be played in the home. The violin therefore

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[67] [Unsigned] *The Young Lady's Book,* 23.

[68] Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity', 88.

[69] Ellis, 'Female Pianists and Their Male Critics', 362.

remained intrinsically linked with the public, virtuoso performer in a way that the piano did not, and consequently remained problematic for female players. Women apparently did not play the violin even within domestic chamber music, which was a popular form of entertainment during the nineteenth century. Nicholas Temperley remarks that the huge amount of domestic and chamber music published during the period acts as evidence of an extremely active culture of musical activity in the home.[70] Chamber music was used as a form of male bonding; as Christina Bashford argues, 'serious musicking was a regular recreation in many country houses and functioned alongside the better-known gentlefolk pursuits of hunting, shooting, and fishing.'[71] Informal concert-parties would often be held, with informal morning rehearsals in the home, followed by an after-dinner performance to invited guests. String quartets were particularly popular, and Bashford notes that the repertoire echoed 'the same Austro-German chamber music that was at the core of the developing public concert repertoire', Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven.[72]

String quintet and quartet culture had fluid boundaries between class, with groups comprised of amateur or professional male musicians, or a mix of the two.[73] This fluidity did not extend to gender; women did not participate, other than as pianists, where they might join 'for violin or cello sonatas, piano trios, piano quartets.'[74] By the mid-1850s, women pianists were taking part in chamber music in increasing numbers, although Katherine Ellis notes that this did cause some critical concern over women pianists who played with male quartets, who 'found themselves in the midst of an aesthetic conflict between theories of musical progress and theories of canonic worth'.[75]

Although women did not partake in playing string quartets, they found alternative means to engage with the repertoire, often through piano transcriptions of the quartet repertoire. The fashionable concertina was also used for playing string quartets. Christina Bashford quotes Richard Blagrove's concertina tutor of 1864:

> Tenor and Bass Concertinas are also manufactured[,] qualified for performing music originally intended for the Viola and Violoncello [and] affording Ladies the peculiar

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[70] Temperley, 'Domestic Music in England', 33.

[71] Christina Bashford, 'Historiography and Invisible Musics: Domestic Chamber Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63, no. 2 (2010), 311.

[72] Bashford, 'Historiography and Invisible Musics', 308.

[73] Ibid., 307.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ellis, 'Female Pianists and Their Male Critics', 378.

> advantage of enabling them to perform quartetts written for two violins, viola and violoncello.[76]

It says much about the strength of the social prohibition on female violin playing that even in private settings, women musicians resorted to playing string quartets on concertinas rather than consider taking up the violin. Women clearly engaged with and interacted with chamber music as much as they could, through joining in piano quintets, and arranging existing repertoire for the piano. Elizabeth Morgan particularly highlights the popularity of the accompanied sonata, which allowed the woman pianist to display her virtuosity, remarking that 'unlike real life, these pieces allowed the fair sex the rare opportunity to serve as authority.'[77]

The publicly performing woman musician in the Nineteenth Century

Aside from navigating notions of virtuosity, and musical education, some further issues impacted the performing activities of both amateur and professional female musicians. During the nineteenth century, the idea of the virtuoso performer as military hero was a popular metaphor, and this link was especially strong for violinists. Both Maiko Kawabata and Dana Gooley have written on the subject, although only Kawabata discusses the ramifications for female players. The association started in the eighteenth century, with the orchestra:

> The favourite metaphors for the orchestra had been authoritarian and military ones– with orchestral leaders cast hierarchically as "generals"–reflecting the aristocratic circumstances under which most permanent orchestras operated.[78]

It seems likely that violinists, as leaders of the orchestra, would have been the most obvious candidates for the 'general' characters, and Kawabata suggests that the political climate offered Napoleon as 'a model of the ideal hero that was easily enough displaced onto violinists'.[79] Meanwhile, the requisite training needed for the increasingly prominent role of the violinist as musical leader in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would also have reinforced the idea of the violin as being unsuitable for women. Louis Sphor's remarks on the traits and education

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[76] Bashford, 'Historiography and Invisible Musics', 309.

[77] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 141.

[78] Gooley, 'The Battle Against Instrumental Virtuosity', 79.

[79] Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender (1789-1830),' *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 2 (2004), 100.

necessary explains:

> It rather embraces all that is of utility to the Artist; under which must be ranked, in the first place, a knowledge of harmony. Having acquired this, you should next ascertain by several attempts in composition whether you possess the gift of musical invention and are qualified by nature for a composer. Even if such be not the case, a well-grounded study of the Theory of Composition should not be neglected, it being absolutely necessary, if you aspire to the office of leader or conductor of an orchestra.[80]

As formal study of harmony, counterpoint and composition was not easily accessible to most women, this would have reaffirmed the idea of the violin as an instrumental for the male domain.

Simultaneously, the changing shape of the bow at the end of the eighteenth century gave a direct point of reference to sword: 'it was straighter, concave rather than convex, sharper at the tip, and thus came to resemble a sword or rapier' and allowed for new techniques, most importantly, military-style dotted rhythms.[81] The bow-weapon metaphor was crucial to the imagery of the violin virtuoso in the nineteenth century:

> The bow-as-weapon was surely the telling image underlying the popular "violin-duels" of the era, in which violinists such as Paganini and Lafont and Clement and Viotti competed against each another....Such fantasies persisted late into the century, as illustrated for instance by a Viennese caricature of violinists Joachim and Sarasate meeting in a clash of bows, with Joachim's bow even appearing as a "mighty blade" to one of his reviewers.[82]

The notion of the virtuoso violinist as military hero in the public consciousness is likely to have contributed to the feeling of women violinists disrupting normal performance codes, with female performance presumably being visually and conceptually jarring to a nineteenth-century audience. It seems that audiences struggled to break away from this characterisation, as Kawabata notes that the first successful female performers on the violin 'were seen as successful only when imitating

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[80] Spohr, *Violin School,* 235.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid., 100-101.

masculine displays of power.'[83] She gives the example of Teresa Milanollo, who was praised as a 'Joan of Arc' among the 'Scipios, Alexanders, and Napoléons of the violin.'[84]

The metaphor of the violinist as military hero rendered the violin an unsuitable instrument for women to play, especially in a virtuosic context. However, as well as these philosophical objections, both amateur and professional women musicians faced practical issues. Professional women performers usually came from families of the artist-musician class, and defied cultural norms to earn money to support their families. In contrast, amateur middle-class women had the luxury of time and tutorage to gain significant levels of skill in music, but were prevented from performing publicly for the sake of family reputation. For this latter group, as these skills were only intended to better their marriage prospects, they faced societal pressure against taking music too seriously, or becoming overly accomplished:

> The upwardly-mobile middle-class male may well have feared that accepting money for work performed by the women of his family would weaken his control of the household and reflect on his ability to provide. Worse than this possible disgrace, however, was the shadow of unrespectability...that still clung to the world of theater and, by extension, to music. The appearance of a woman on the concert stage could undermine the hard-won social status of her bourgeois family; consequently, even the most gifted were expected to confine their musical activities to the home.[85]

Even professional women musicians from artist-musician families who married into the aristocracy were expected to move into the amateur realm. Interestingly though, there appear to have been some socially acceptable contexts in which women took up professional music making. Reich highlights the case of two musicians, Clara Novello and Henriette Sontag, who both reverted to their professional careers when their husbands fell into financial trouble.[86] Erasmus Darwin also indicated that music-making could be resorted to in times of financial need: 'there are situations in a married state; which may call forth all the energies of the mind in the care, education, or

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[83] Kawabata, 'Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance', 104.

[84] *Allgemeinen Wiener Musikzeitung* (1843), 407, quoted in Hoffmann, *Instrument und Körper,* 194 in Kawabata, 'Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance', 104.

[85] Nancy B. Reich 'Women as Musicians: A Question of Class,' in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 132.

[86] Ibid., 132.

provision, for a family; which the inactivity, folly, or death of a husband may render necessary.'[87] Both the late Renaissance Italian convents and Venetian orphan conservatoires taught orphan girls to play 'male' instruments such as the violin, and Rita Steblin suggests that this was partly to attract audiences and income to concerts. She also highlights the case of several women from musical dynasty families:

> In France the daughters of such famous viol players as Sanite-Colombe, Marais, and Caix became quite accomplished performers (even on the bass viol) although they could never hold an appointment in the royal chapel. The Couperin musical dynasty produced many female organists over the course of almost two hundred years.[88]

Women who pursued a career in performance faced a range of practical issues. The first was an absence of role models and support networks for women musicians, and this is likely to have significantly impacted the numbers of women considering developing their musical skills to virtuoso level. The importance of this support has been highlighted by Elizabeth Wood, who argues that:

> Female systems of kin, friendship, and mentorship are crucial not merely for emotional interaction but for formal skill sharing and career shaping .... Courageous older, established women mentors, role models, musical mothers, effective and generous "patrons," have forced access for women to musical education, maturation and career options.[89]

It is likely that this had a significant impact on the numbers of women considering developing their musical skills to virtuoso level. Those women who did pursue careers as professional musicians had to strike a careful balance between their art and their reputation. Nancy Reich highlights the practical issues they faced:

> As a professional, the woman musician was paid for her work and consequently regarded as unfeminine; a male agent or manager was necessary to protect her

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[87] Darwin, *Plan for the conduct of female education,* 12-13.

[88] Steblin, 'The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments', 142.

[89] Elizabeth Wood, 'Women in Music', *Signs* 6/2 (1980), 294.

> "femininity." He could bargain for her fees, provide an escort, make tour arrangements, and, often, guarantee the public that the pianist, singer, or composer in question gave her womanly responsibilities first priority–whether it was true or not.[90]

Most of these female professional musicians were pianists; very few women performed on the violin in the first half of the nineteenth century, and it is consequently difficult to gain an accurate picture of how they were regarded or the issues they faced. However, the experiences of female pianists can shed some light on those of female violinists; by the 1840s, there were enough women playing the piano publicly across Europe to gain some sense of the public feeling about female virtuosi.

Katharine Ellis' work on women pianists in Paris reveals the far-reaching conflict caused by the virtuoso-composer model, discussed earlier in this chapter, but she argues that that women pianists carved out for themselves 'a professional space which lay between that of the salon musician and the touring virtuoso. A feminized space in that it involved interpretation, not composition'.[91] However, Ellis found that the male critics in Paris struggled to adapt their critical response to the influx of female pianists, as performance values had been so tied up in displays of masculinity at the piano:

> The "reign of the women" brought with it particular problems for critics who praised... Liszt, Thalberg, Doehler, and others for the stereotypically masculine qualities of athletic bravura, interpretive and physical power, and showmanship. Such qualities were diametrically opposed to those prized in women....A woman pianist performing operatic fantasies and other virtuoso pieces in Paris's concert halls provided a direct challenge to such behavioral codes by making a spectacle of herself. ....French bourgeois mores, like their Victorian counterparts, ensured that any public performance by a woman raised questions about her personal conduct.[92]

If these were the issues facing female players of the piano, a generally accepted instrument for women, it is easy to imagine the backlash that might have occurred at the suggestion of a woman playing the violin.

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[90] Reich, 'Women as Musicians', 138.

[91] Ellis, 'Female Pianists and Their Male Critics', 385.

[92] Ibid., 361.

Both Rita Steblin and Elizabeth Morgan suggest that the popularity of female child prodigies helped pave the way for the relaxing of ideas about women musicians playing in public, and I would argue that this was particularly the case for the violin. Steblin notes the Mozart family as being particularly influential:

> Since novelty was an important part of these circus-like affairs, the audience was often treated to the spectacle of a young girl playing the violin or flute. At first the young girls were forced to abandon their careers upon reaching puberty (as in the case of Nannerl Mozart or of the violinist Gertrud Schmeling...). But as the public grew accustomed to seeing more and more girls playing the formerly "male" instruments, the old stereotyping began to disappear–at least for the violin, violoncello, and lighter wind instruments.[93]

Morgan also discusses the importance of the Mozart family, and highlights that during the 1780s, numerous pianists under the age of fourteen appeared. She remarks that 'their youth may have helped to forge their professional paths, making their appearances in the public spotlight culturally acceptable.'[94] Ellis' work on the topic noted that a number of women pianists who started their careers as touring virtuosi recast themselves as chamber musicians around the age of twenty, explaining that they 'established themselves as resident chamber pianists with the elite of Paris's string quartets and other chamber music societies, sharing their duties with an increasing number of like-minded male pianists.'[95] It is likely that at this age they might have been starting to contemplate marriage; at some level, they might have felt that that a career as a chamber musician would be more palatable to suitors, sitting more comfortably in the realm of acceptable female behaviour than that of the itinerant touring lifestyle, as well as being more compatible with family life. However, as women did not play the violin even within the private confines of domestic chamber music, they were therefore at a disadvantage compared to players of the piano, since women pianists could partake in chamber music with male musicians without perceived issue. However, the same was not true for women violinists until much later in the nineteenth century. This may have discouraged some women from pursuing a career on the violin, knowing that there would be limited opportunities for playing once they reached a marriageable age.

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[93] Steblin, 'The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments', 143.

[94] Morgan, 'The Virtuous Virtuosa', 157.

[95] Ellis, 'Female Pianists and Their Male Critics', 378.

Conclusions

Existing work on women violinists in the first half of the nineteenth century has identified a range of contributing elements which rendered the violin problematic for women to play during the period, as outlined at the start of this chapter. However, an examination of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century source materials reveals that in addition to the factors most frequently cited in relation to the prejudice against women violinists, socio-musical conventions around the 'correct' scope, setting and nature of women's music-making are also likely to have been a significant and so far under-recognised factor in prohibiting female violin playing.

It is important to note that several of the secondary sources cited here do not focus specifically on documenting practices in England, rather, they either discuss Europe more generally, such as in Reich and Kawabata's work, or they examine specific contexts within Europe. In particular, Cheng and Ellis both predominantly discuss a French context, while some of Gooley's key source material has a German origin. This raises some questions about the extent to which such writings are pertinent to an English setting. Although these modern writings might be concerned–to varying extents–with broader European contexts, it is significant that many of the key ideas posed in them align with the nineteenth-century English source materials discussed in the chapter. In particular, concerns around repertoire choice feature across work such as Cheng's, Ellis' and nineteenth-century ladies' manuals. Broader concerns around the role of the performer in relation to the composer and the work appear to have been similarly comparable across sources such as those cited in Gooley and contemporary English texts. It must also be remembered that there was movement of musicians across Europe, with many foreign players active in London, and significant European influence on the London music scene; it is therefore also likely that continental ideas would have influenced English attitudes and thinking to at least some degree. This is not to say that that there were not differences between European contexts, and the emergence of French and Italian female violinists in contrast to the English dearth of women players during the period is testament to this. However, there were clearly similarities in overarching concerns about the nature of music making, especially for women.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the allotted instruments and performance contexts for each gender reflected social structures and conventions of the period. Contemporary sources including books on etiquette and female education cautioned against women becoming excessively accomplished or making a spectacle of themselves, and warned of the corruptive dangers of vanity and self-absorption. Women's instrumental activities were mainly confined to the

piano, and venturing outside the realm of socially allocated instruments presented a number of issues.

Pervasive underlying gender roles were a key factor, with the broader societal gender divide and allocated roles of the sexes echoed in the instruments and performance contexts considered to be appropriate for each gender; just as women were expected to play a supporting social role to their male counterparts, rather than acting in a leading capacity, their musical roles were correspondingly to accompany and to remain seated at cumbersome instruments which confined them to the home.

Furthermore, ideas on female intelligence and concerns around vanity created further challenges and shaped the limits of women's music-making. Debates surrounding whether women musicians had the requisite intellect to interpret the work of the 'great' composers, alongside the dark glamour of the nineteenth-century virtuosi, are likely to have reinforced underlying resistance to women playing instruments other than those to which they had been socially allocated.

The links between the violin virtuoso and the military hero cemented the gendering of the violin as an instrument for men in the nineteenth century. Professional women pianists faced criticism for attempting virtuoso performance, and women violinists would have faced the combined criticism of tackling a virtuoso instrument, *and* one which was firmly assigned to male performers. As music formed a crucial role in courting and social interaction, it is understandable that many women did not want to shock or endanger their prospects by playing a socially prohibited instrument.

Chapter 2:

'*Fiend-tenanted' fiddles:* The impact of the violin as occult instrument on female violin playing in the nineteenth century.

Introduction

The notion of the violin as the instrument of choice for the characters of Death and the Devil is long established in European culture. During the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this link was particularly strong; Tartini's 'Devil's Trill Sonata' (published in Paris c.1798) enjoyed tremendous popularity, inspiring numerous ballets, operas and theatrical productions throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.[1] Paganini had unparalleled success throughout Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century due to his striking appearance and seemingly supernatural performing techniques, both of which were ascribed to his rumoured relationship with the Devil, and cultivated a dark glamour around his performances. The Gothic idiom was in vogue throughout the arts, and numerous stories featuring Death or the Devil and the violin appeared in fashionable journals and periodicals such as *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Reynold's Miscellany*, and *The Musical World.*

Despite this, little of the existing literature on nineteenth-century women's music-making has considered any connection between the idea of the violin as occult instrument and the informal prohibition on women's violin playing. The exception is Paula Gillett's *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914,* which contains an entire chapter dedicated to the subject, entitled 'Woman and the Devil's Instrument'. Gillett argues the violin's strong links with sin, death, and the devil as being one of the two causes of the 'ban' on female violin playing (the other being the perceived female gender of the instrument).[2]

The limited discussion in wider musicological literature is accounted for by a lack of supporting implicit or explicit evidence for the link; it is difficult to find any literature from the period which suggests that the idea of the violin as occult instrument rendered it 'unsuitable' or morally detrimental to women. This is not to say that there *was* no connection, and it seems unlikely that the popular Gothic awareness and fashionable occult violin stories would not have

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[1] It is not clear at what point it was first sold or published in England.

[2] Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914:"Encroaching on all man's privileges"* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000), 78.

influenced ideas about female violin playing. While Gillett's reasoning – that the violin's occult links were a contributing factor to attitudes towards violin playing – seems plausible, she too fails to give specific examples of literature discussing the association between the violin and sin and death, and much of her chapter on *Women and the Devil's Instrument* discusses aesthetic issues of women playing the violin, rather than the occult connections. For this reason, a fresh examination of the occult violin trope is valuable in order to fully consider the extent to which it may have influenced ideas about the moral implications of women playing the violin and contributed to the effective prohibition on female violin playing. This chapter discusses the history of the occult violin in folklore before the 1800s, and various tropes which may have influenced perceptions of the violin, before exploring how these translated to the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, the trope appeared in a variety of mediums across the arts, including theatre, literature and visual art. This discussion considers the impact of these on public perceptions of the violin – and, by extension, its playing by women – alongside consideration of aspects such as agency and nineteenth-century moral values.

The violin as occult instrument pre-1800

Folktales

The origins of the occult violin trope can be found throughout the numerous tales in European folklore which link the supernatural with music. Herbert Halpert's 1949 article, 'The Devil and the Fiddle' provides one of the most comprehensive discussions of traditional tales and legends relating to the Devil and the violin in Europe and America. Halpert describes the Devil as 'a sociable fellow with a weakness for music and musicians'[3] and explains 'the idea of a musician who learns from or is given extraordinary musical skill by a supernatural being is well known in folklore'.[4]

Halpert found stories of tunes 'originally learned from fairies' to be common throughout European folklore.[5] A folk-story from Ireland provides a typical example - 'Carolan the bard' is visited by fairies in a dream, and wakes up playing their music from memory.[6] This tale is particularly pertinent as there are clear parallels between it and the story of Tartini's *Devil's Trill* Sonata (discussed more fully later in this chapter) in which Tartini was visited by the violin-playing Devil in a dream and tried to recreate the piece on waking; Halpert suggests this to be an adaptation of the old folk-tale. Halpert gives numerous other examples of music being learned

[3] Herbert Halpert, 'The Devil and the Fiddle', *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* 2/2 (December 1943), 39.

[4] Ibid., 41-42.

[5] Ibid., 43.

[6] Ibid., 42.

from supernatural entities, including a Swedish story of a 'Neck' called Stromkarl, who often lived near a water-mill or waterfall, and would teach people his music in return for the sacrifice of a black lamb.[7] Several examples are also given of musicians falling foul of fairies by transgressing the agreed use of their music, resulting in various unfortunate fates including disfigurement and death.[8]

Even from a brief exploration of European folk tales, a long-held connection between music and the supernatural is evident and Rita Steblin's later work 'Death as Fiddler' concurs with Halpert's suggestion that 'the Christian Devil has replaced other mythical figures' over the course of history'.[9] However, it is clear that in folk literature, there was no particular 'supernatural' instrument, rather, the link was between the supernatural and music in general. These stories tend to involve at least one of the following three recurring themes:

1. A supernatural being teaches a piece of music or an instrument to a human character, often as part of a deal or bargain.

2. A human character is visited by a supernatural musician in a dream. The dreamer wakes up playing the music from memory

3. Music having a supernatural effect - most commonly uncontrollable dancing.

Death/the Devil, dance and the violin

The source predominantly used by Gillett to support her argument that the violin's occult links influenced public opinion towards it as an unsuitable instrument for ladies is Rita Steblin's 'Death as a fiddler: The study of a convention in European Art, Literature and Music'. Steblin's work utilises a vast amount of European folklore and iconography to explore the evolution of folk tales into the Victorian trope of the violin as Devil's instrument. Many of these sources include the themes outlined above: musicians selling their soul to the devil in return for a magic violin or exceptional playing abilities, and many stories of violins inciting uncontrollable dancing. Although Death and the Devil appear interchangeably in violin legends, Steblin noted that the Devil has tended to appear more frequently in literature, whereas Death usually appears in iconographical sources.[10]

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[7] Ibid., 43. Halpert notes that Swedish folklore has many stories of minstrels who learned music from the necks.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Halpert, 'The Devil and the Fiddle', 41. Rita Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler: The study of a convention in European Art, Literature and Music'. *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis* 14 (1990), 277.

[10] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler, 277.

The medieval Dance of Death convention, *Danse Macabre,* or *Totentanz* was the most influential legend in perpetuating the link between music and the supernatural, and cemented the idea of the violin as 'devil's instrument'. The trope appeared in the fourteenth century, influenced by the outbreak of bubonic plague. Steblin explains:

> It usually involved a dramatic, pictorial or literary portrayal of a number of skeleton-like figures leading a procession of living beings to a charnel house (House of the Dead). These skeletons were thought to be the Dead, having come to collect the Living. The message imparted was that no one, pope or beggar, man or woman, old person or child, escaped from the call of Death. The religious authorities encouraged this practice because it helped to reinforce their teachings of leading a moral life, of being prepared for Death at all times.[11]

The earliest known *Totentanz* representations – often woodcuts and texts produced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries – depicted Death playing wind instruments, such as the shawm, flute or pipes.[12] Consequently, Steblin concludes:

> The oft repeated statement by early scholars of the Totentanz, that Death "in the Middle Ages had a distinct preference for the violin" must be false. More often than not he was depicted as a wind player – a piper – and this is confirmed by the well-known legend (dated 1284) of the Pied Piper of Hamlin.. . usually interpreted as Death.[13]

The folktales and 'Dance of Death' trope were still in widespread circulation during the nineteenth century, although Steblin notes that while the original stories would have originally involved a pipe or wind instrument, this gradually evolved into the violin.[14]

Mortal dancing, morality and the violin

It was not only the 'Dance of Death' trope that contributed to the idea of the violin as occult instrument; the association was also reinforced by the role of the violin in leading dance music

[11] Ibid., 272.

[12] Ibid., 272-3.

[13] Ibid., 273.

[14] Ibid., 277-278.

during the 1700-1800s. Paula Gillett specifically links the emergence of the violin as 'devil's instrument' to the mid-sixteenth century, when it was first used to accompany dancing:

> The greatly enhanced audibility of the modern instrument, combined with its ability to transmit a strong rhythmic pulse, made it an ideal accompaniment to dancing, a practice denounced by Protestant and Catholic clergymen in many European communities as the invention of the devil and an activity conducive to unrestrained sensuality.[15]

Both factions of the church considered dancing a dangerous pastime, acting as a potential pathway to sexual sin, and congregations would have been frequently reminded of its moral dangers. However, Steblin points out that some of this fear was not misplaced, 'Since epidemics were always a serious threat, dances, with so many people in close contact, no doubt led to the spread of disease and death.'[16] Social attitudes towards dancing also influenced attitudes towards players of the violin; 'Gentlemen merchants' and 'other virtuous people' played the viol, whereas the violin's use in dancing resulted in 'the general opinion . . . that a common "Bier Fiedler" or dance-hall violinist was a low-class scoundrel.'[17] By the 1800s, there was therefore a cultural awareness dating back several centuries which linked death or the devil and music, often connected through dancing. As the violin had taken over as the instrument most strongly associated with dance, the association of it as the devil's instrument also evolved from wind instruments such as pipes to the violin. By the nineteenth century, the idea of the violin as the devil's instrument was firmly rooted in the public imagination, and this was reflected throughout the arts, with ballets, plays, poems and novels incorporating the idiom. Although by the nineteenth century European society was increasingly tending towards rationality rather than superstition, with such a long history as the devil's instrument, it is unsurprising that the violin was still considered unsuitable for women to play. In particular, the representation of women in stories concerning the violin may have caused concern, as popular themes involved the violin being used as an instrument of seduction to entice young women, players of the instrument entering agreements with the Devil, and women meeting unfortunate fates at the hands of violinists, sometimes ending up as part of the violin themselves.

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[15] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 88.

[16] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler,' 277.

[17] Ibid., 276.

The violin as occult instrument in nineteenth-century England

Steblin asserts that by the nineteenth century 'the old association between dancing and Death, had become a convention'.[18] Although superstition and religious fear had a weaker hold on the population than in the god-fearing middle ages, the popularity of the *danse macabre* genre throughout Europe reinforced the notion of the violin as an instrument of dark forces. Gillett notes that in popular legends, 'The devil's fiddling skills were especially valuable when he bartered for the souls of the most musically gifted violinists, who were susceptible to offers of magical violins or of dazzling, superhuman levels of virtuosic mastery.'[19] However, Gillett does not include any supporting discussion around nineteenth-century ideas of women's morality. Her implicit argument is that women were more susceptible to moral corruption, so in the context of the above quote, there would have been increased concern about the impact of occult bargains for female violin players.

The preoccupation with Death during the Romantic era is also significant. Steblin attributes this to 'a new awareness of the horrors of war (French Revolution, Revolution of 1848)' and 'diseases (cholera, syphilis, tuberculosis) which attacked those in the prime of life, which led to a rebirth of the old Dance of Death genre.'[20] Alongside this, the early nineteenth century saw an increased interest in and publication of myths and legends in England, including the Grimm brothers' stories in 1823.[21] Folklore journals and societies were also popular, and Gillett remarks 'the influence of fairy tales and folklore in art, literature and the drama was profound.'[22] This was reflected across the arts, with the theme of the violin as occult instrument regularly featuring in theatre, literature, art and the musical realm.

Theatre

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Devil and the violin was a popular theatrical trope. One example was a 'burlesque' entitled the *Devil's Violin* which appeared in Paris in the 1840s, loosely based on the Tartini *Devil's Trill* story. A contemporary review thus summarised the plot:

> [the violin was] endowed with certain magical properties, by means of which he is enabled to create a passion in the bosom of a young lady who has hitherto been

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[18] Ibid., 283.

[19] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 89.

[20] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 283.

[21] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 91.

[22] Ibid.

> indifferent to his suit. But the devil requires his soul in exchange for this service–a compact which *Tartini* has spirit enough to resist. The demon revenges himself by depriving him of his reason; but a counter influence is set up by *Friar Tuck*, who gives his client another violin–one of celestial manufacture, whereby he subdues his assailants, and ingratiates himself with his sweetheart's father, who has hitherto discountenanced his pretensions. This is the substance of the story, which is worked out in dialogue in the usual burlesque style, and enforced by scenic tableaux; upon which, we may add, the success of the piece will chiefly depend.[23]

The production appeared in London around May 1849, and according to a review in *The Morning Post,* drew a large audience: 'Last evening was produced to a house really filled, since there did not appear to be a single foot of space unoccupied.'[24] However, it seems that the occult material was not taken particularly seriously, 'All this is nonsence [sic] when related, but it passes off pleasantly when seen by gas light, enlivened by music, and made brilliant by various coloured fires.'[25] This production attracted a significantly large number of reviews and attention in the press, and was also reported on by publications including *The Musical World*.[26]

In June 1893, the *Morning Post* reported a 'new ballet in four *tableaux,* entitled "Fidelia: or, the Devil's Violin", which was performed at the Alhambra Theatre, and appears to have been based on the same story as the earlier production discussed above; the tale seems to have been a popular attraction for the general public. The recurring theme of the seduction of a female character by Tartini via the devilish violin is particularly significant in the context of women playing the violin. Despite several reviews clearly taking a tongue-in-cheek approach to the subject matter and dismissing the devil-stories as legend and myth, the recurrent woman–violin theme is indicative to some extent of a remaining underlying concern about moral implications for women in contact with the violin.

<u>In Literature</u>

The occult violin trope was also in evidence throughout a variety of written mediums, from popular magazines to poetry. In 1843 *Blackwood's Magazine* published a story entitled 'The Devil's

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[23] [Unsigned] 'Adelphi Theatre,' *The Standard* no.7721 (12 May 1849), n.p.

[24] [Unsigned] 'The Devil's violin and the revolt of the flowers,' *The Morning Post* no.23533 (10 May 1849), 5.

[25] Ibid.

[26] [Unsigned] 'Dramatic Intelligence,' *The Musical World*. 24/19 (12 May 1849), 295.

Frills.'[27] Presented as being a Dutch tale, it tells the story of a brewer's son named Frederick Katwingen, and his rival, a 'Dutch Paganini', Laurentius Castero, who he is due to encounter in a violin contest. Frederick's string breaks three times as he starts to play, and he returns home frustrated and destroys his violin. A cloaked character appears as Frederick is about to throw himself into a nearby lake, and tells him that there is due to be a re-match the next day, with the prize being the hand of Maina, the 'beauty of Haarlem', with whom Frederick is besotted. Frederick laments the loss of his violin, and declares that he wishes to win the contest against Castero 'More than for life–more than for love–more than for....my eternal salvation', at which point the stranger tells him to go home, where he will find his violin restored to its previous state. The stranger vanishes with suitably melodramatic effect:

> The Unknown advanced to the lake. Immediately the waves bubbled up, and rose it vast billows; and opening with dreadful noise, exposed an unfathomable abyss. At the same moment thunder growled in the sky, the moon hid herself behind a veil of clouds, and the brewer's son, half choked with the smell of brimstone, fell insensible on the ground.[28]

Frederick returns home to find his violin whole. The stranger returns the next day, and Frederick asks his identity:

> "Who am I!" answered the man in the mantle, with all the muscles of his face in violent convulsions. . . I am your master. . .why do you tremble so? you were bold enough when we met. I saw the thought in your heart–if Satan should rise before me, and promise me victory over my rival at the price of my soul, I would agree to the condition!"
>
> "Satan!–you are Satan!" shrieked Frederick, and closed his eyes in horror.[29]

This perpetuates the trope of the violinist entering a deal with the devil for exceptional playing abilities. In this case, instead of offering his soul in the deal, Frederick has to bargain for the soul of his first-born child. The agreement is made that when the child is born, Frederick will hang some of Maina's traditional wedding lace over the doorway as a sign. Frederick wins the second competition and marries Maina. However, he manages to cheat the deal with Satan; when his child is born, he

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[27] Blackwood, Alexander. 'The Devil's Frills'. *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine* 54/335 (August 1843), 225-233.

[28] Ibid., 228.

[29] Ibid., 231.

has a moment of divine inspiration, takes the agreed piece of lace, and dips it in consecrated water before hanging it over the threshold, denying Satan entry. According to the tale, that is the reason why throughout Haarlem, small squares of lace, known as 'the devil's frills' can be seen over doors, placed there by husbands to protect their pregnant wives.[30]

It is difficult to ascertain how seriously this would have been taken by nineteenth-century readers. To a modern-day reader the tale appears comically histrionic, but the style of writing is in keeping with fiction of the day and thus can be presumed to carry at least some degree of dramatic impact. The story also appeared in *Bradshaw's Journal* in 1843, with a rather more reserved choice of language and narrative.[31]

Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine published a similar tale in 1844, entitled 'The Dwarf's Well'.[32] A rather lengthy and convoluted story, it involves a character named Klaus String-striker, a 'dwarf' with magical powers, whose violin playing dances another character to death. He repeats this trick with a wedding party later on in the story, but spares them from death.

Slightly later, in 1852, *Reynold's Miscellany* published 'The Charmed Violin', described as a 'German Tale'.[33] A violinist named Krespel is reunited with his estranged daughter, a singer. The daughter loses her voice, which then manifests itself in Krespel's violin. When the daughter dies, the violin self-destructs too, 'When she died. . . the strings of this violin snapped asunder, and the sounding board broke with an awful crash. The violin is laid in her coffin–the violin is buried with her!'[34] This story is particularly pertinent, since it is the most explicit example of the idea of a woman's soul being entwined with the violin.

These stories appeared in a range of nineteenth-century journals and magazines; the underpinning of some of these with a definite sense of humour suggests that they may not have been taken *entirely* seriously, and were rather more for amusement than preaching wariness of the occult. An 1840 article 'The Devil's Doings in Music' serves as a prime example; discussing Tartini's violin, the author remarks that the instrument's present owner might lend it to his students, on the basis that 'the handling of the neck of the instrument, which is naturally highly saturated with brimstone, most generally proving efficacious when the ordinary sulphuric or other remedial

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[30] Ibid., 233.

[31] [Unsigned] 'The Rival Musicians,' *S.Bradshaw's journal: a miscellany of literature, science, and art* (March 1843), 235-243.

[32] Blackwood, Alexander. 'Traditions and Tales of Upper Lusatia. No. III,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh magazine* 56/346 (August 1844). 196-215.

[33] [Unsigned] 'The Charmed Violin,' *Reynold's Miscellany of romance, general literature, science, and art* 8/100 (1 May 1852). 228-230.

[34] Ibid., 229.

applications have totally failed.'[35] The author also pokes fun at the 'much-talked-of, much-dreaded, much-blackened, GREAT UNKNOWN!' - in many of the tales 'The-great-unknown' being Satan, whose hapless victim only realises his true identity part-way through the story.[36] This is particularly significant as it indicates that the trope of the occult violin was instantly recognisable to the nineteenth-century reader, suggesting a wide-spread awareness of the links between the instrument and the supernatural. It therefore seems probable that the recurrent themes of moral corruption (bartering, blackmail, being deceived by supernatural characters) in these tales might well have influenced popular feeling (whether consciously or not) about the suitability of the violin for women.

Aside from these popular written forms, Steblin's work also discusses Death playing the fiddle throughout English literature; Steblin highlights Robert Burns's poem *The De'il's awa wi' th' Exiseman* (1792), Robert Browning's long poem *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* of 1873, and Charles Baudelaire's *Les Tentations* of 1863, all of which contain references to death playing the violin, alongside Nikolaus Lenau's epic poem *Faust*, written in 1836 and Gottfriend Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* of 1856. Lenau's *Faust* has death's agent Mephistopheles as virtuoso violinist, whose playing helps Faust seduce a woman, while Keller has Romeo and Juliet falling under the spell of a fiddler.[37]

Iconography

Alongside written mediums, the idea of the violin as death or the devil's instrument was further reinforced by it featuring in iconographical sources throughout the nineteenth century. Notable examples include *Tartini's Dream* by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1824), which depicts a winged devil with a violin serenading a nightcap-clad Tartini from the foot of the musician's bed; Rethel's *Death as Strangler* (1851), which represents the 1831 Paris cholera epidemic and portrays Death as a skeleton, lulling the people around him into a permanent sleep as he plays on a violin made of bones; and Arnold Böcklin's *Self portrait with Death playing the fiddle* (1872), which depicts a violin-playing Death looming behind the artist. Again, the emergence of these throughout the nineteenth-century suggests an enduring popular trope.

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[35] [Unsigned] 'The Devil's Doings in Music.' *The Musical World* 14/243 (19 November 1840). 320.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Steblin,'Death as a fiddler', 271.

Illustration 1. *Tartini's Dream* by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1824).

Illustration 2. *Self portrait with Death playing the fiddle* (1872) by Arnold Böcklin

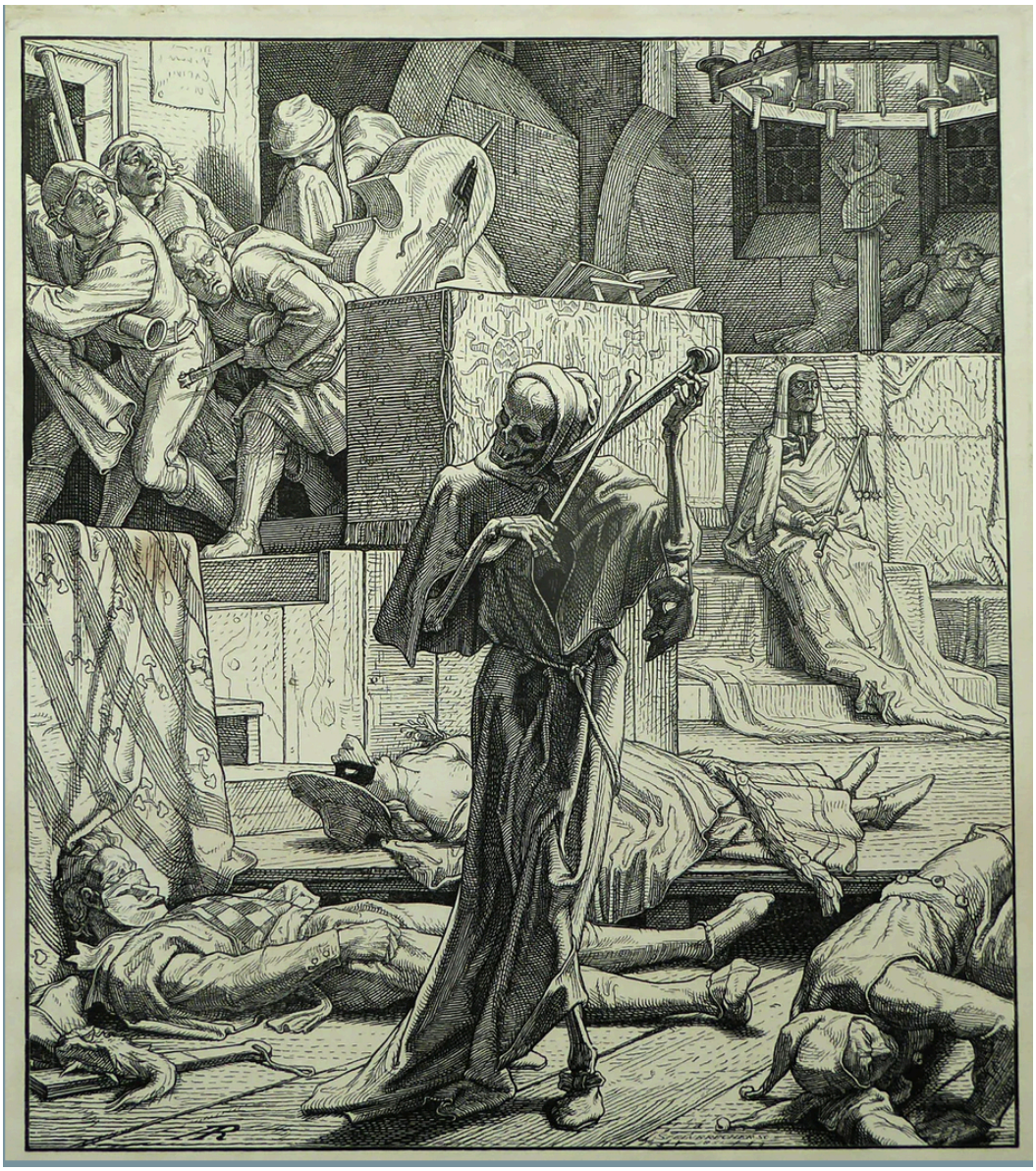

Illustration 3. *Death as Strangler* by Alfred Rethel (1851)

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, there was a marked shift in attitudes towards the occult and paranormal. Where the subject had previously been cause for moral concern, towards the end of the century, the study of the paranormal began to be cultivated and valued.[38] This was reflected in the popularity of the theme of death and the violin in classical music between the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Steblin cites specific examples including Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* (1875)*;* the scherzo movement with solo scordatura violin of Mahler's Fourth symphony (1900), inscribed 'Death strikes up to play'; and Stravinsky's *L'histoire du Soldat* (1918), all of which feature the motif of death as fiddler.[39]

Violinists in the nineteenth century

Rita Steblin's work highlights the importance of 'anecdotes told about the great violinists' as evidence for the links between Death (or the devil) playing the violin.[40] One of the first examples of this in England related to the German virtuoso Thomas Baltzar, who visited England in around 1655. An oft-quoted passage from a diary by Anthony Wood reads:

> [Baltzar] came to one of the weekly meetings at Mr. Ellis's house, and he played to the wonder of all the auditory; and exercising his fingers and instrument several wayes to the utmost of his power, Wilson thereupon the public Professor (the greatest judge of musick there ever was) did after his humoursome way, stoop downe to Baltzar's feet to see whether he had a huff (hoof) on, that is to say whether he was a devil or not, because he acted beyond the parts of man.[41]

Although this incident took place well before the period under discussion in this chapter, it is useful to see how early the idea of the demonically possessed violinist appeared, and how deep rooted this idea would have been in the public consciousness by the nineteenth century. The idea of the violin as agent of the occult was reinforced in the nineteeth-century imagination by the careers of Tartini and Paganini, both of whom took advantage of the popularity of the medium to further their careers. Indeed, the Baltzar and Tartini anecdotes were both quoted in an 1820s

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[38] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 101.

[39] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 271-272.

[40] Steblin,'Death as a fiddler', 279.

[41] Jeffrey Pulver, *A biographical dictionary of old English music,* London 1927, 22. Quoted in Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler,' 279-280.

series 'On the rise and progress of the violin'.[42] The Baltzar anecdote was also quoted in *The lady's monthly museum* in 1812.[43]

Tartini

The legend created around Tartini was particularly significant in sustaining the occult violin trope into the 1800s, as Gillett puts it, 'The supernatural aura that never entirely departed from the violin's persona was strengthened during the nineteenth century by the frequently-evoked memory of....Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770) and Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840).'[44] Gillett also highlights the frequency with which Tartini was associated with 'diabolical influence' in musical fiction.[45] Tartini's *Devil's Trill Sonata* provides a particularly apt illustration of the popularity of the trope. The piece was apparently inspired by a dream Tartini had, where he gave the Devil his violin, to see how good a player he was. To his surprise, the Devil played such a beautiful piece that Tartini attempted to recreate it when he woke up. During the nineteenth century, the Tartini legend was popular throughout Europe and it inspired numerous works, including the Pugni ballet of 1849 and Falchi's opera, *Il trillo del diavolo*, performed in Rome in 1899.[46] The story was repeated in numerous publications during the nineteenth century, including the *Theatre: or, Dramatic and literary mirror* in 1819, and *The Mirror of Literature* in 1832.[47]

An 1805 article in *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland* forms a good example of Tartini's prominence in the public consciousness. It remarked that 'Every Musical Amateur has heard of the celebrated Tartini, though his works, generally speaking, have been confined to the Continent.'[48] The article describes the *Devil's Trill Sonata* as 'the solo of the

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[42] [Unsigned] 'On the rise and progress of the violin,' *The Quarterly musical magazine and review* 4/13 (January 1822), 52-58; and [Unsigned] 'On the rise and progress of the violin,' *The Quarterly musical magazine and review* 4/16 (October 1822), 444-449.

[43] [Unsigned] 'Musical Memoranda,' *The Lady's monthly museum of amusement and instruction: being an assemblage of whatever can tend to please the fancy, interest the mind, or exalt the character of the British fair. By a society of ladies, 1798-1828* 13 (November 1812), 265-269.

[44] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 94.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 280.

[47] Unsigned. 'Devilish Good Music,' *Theatre: or, Dramatic and literary mirror* 1/12 (29 May 1819), 190-191 and [Unsigned] 'The Devil's Sonata,' *The Mirror of literature, amusement, and instruction, November 1822-June 1847* 19/530 (21 January 1832), 42-43.

[48] [Unsigned] 'The Devil's Solo,' *The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser, for Lancashire, Westmorland, &c.* 227 (19 October 1805), n.p.

infernal performer' and goes on to describe the technical details of the work, with a definite tongue-in-cheek tone:

> The particular passage which made the greatest impression, and therefore may be considered as the genuine strains of his Satanic Majesty, is designated by the title of the "Author's Dream."– One part is uncommonly difficult of execution; it consists of consecutive shakes upon consecutive notes, while the other fingers of the performer are occupied in a corresponding accompaniment. It is, unquestionably a *devilish* hard passage, and none but the Devil, or a devilish fine player, can accomplish it. The author informs us, in a marginal note, that they were the shakes performed by the Devil at the foot of the bed, It cannot but be a great source of satisfaction to find, that a personage, whom, from our earliest infancy, we are taught to dread, is not quite so bad as he has been described; and, as he has "music in his soul," we may not unreasonably hope that he possesses other qualities in an equal degree, and that his love of the fine arts may, in progress of time, effectuate a complete and thorough reformation in his character habits.[49]

Although this wry review makes for entertaining reading, it provides an insight into public attitude towards occult violin legends, and suggests the theme – popular as it was throughout the nineteenth century – was by this point more of a fashionable fancy than a subject for moral panic.

Charles Burney's *The present state of music in France and Italy* of 1771 provides a contemporary discussion of Tartini's life. Tartini had died a few months before Burney's arrival in Padua, but Burney relates the tale of Tartini's devil-dream as it was given by 'M. de la Lande',[50] who had apparently heard the story from Tartini himself:

> He dreamed one night in 1713, that he had made a compact with the Devil, who promised to be at his service on all occasions; and during this vision everything succeeded according to his mind; his wishes were prevented, and his desires always surpassed by the assistance of his new servant. In short, he imagined he gave the Devil his violin, in order to discover what kind of a musician he was; when, to his great astonishment, he heard him play a solo so singularly beautiful, which he executed with such superior taste and precision, that it surpassed all the music which he had ever

[49] Ibid.

[50] Presumably the French composer Michel Richard Delalande (1657-1726).

> heard or conceived in his life. So great was his surprize, and so exquisite his delight upon this occasion, that it deprived him of the power of breathing. He awoke with the violence of his sensation, and instantly seized his fiddle, in hopes of expressing what he had just heard, but in vain: he, however, then composed a piece, which is perhaps, the best known of all his works, he called it *the Devil's Sonata,* but it was so inferior to what his sleep had produced, that he declared he would have broken his instrument, and abandoned music for ever, if he could have subsisted by any other means.[51]

However, Burney's account portrays Tartini as a religious man of 'piety and good works', stating that in later life he played at the church of St. Anthony of Padua, where 'so strong was his zeal for the service of his patron saint, that he seldom let a week pass without regaling him to the utmost power of his palsied nerves'.[52]

Paganini

Rita Steblin's work highlights Paganini as having 'more than anything else reinforced the popular notion that Death or his alter-ego, the devil, played the violin.'[53] Steblin likens his reception in Europe in the 1830s to the 'mass hysteria' of rock concerts today. Gillett's work concurs, 'The most powerful of all evocations of the violin's demonic associations was the memory of Paganini; many people still alive in the 1880s and even in the 1890s had personally experienced the amazing performances he gave throughout Britain in 1831 and 1832.'[54] This is particularly significant when considering the longevity of attitudes towards women and the violin during the nineteenth century. Even before he performed in England, dark rumours circulated about Paganini, usually concerning him having murdered his wife or mistress and having used his time in jail to further hone his skill on the violin. Various tales circulated that the spirit of the dead woman inhabited his violin, that the strings were made from her gut, and that he had sold his soul to the devil. Gillett describes an 'insatiable appetite for details of Paganini's life, especially the most sensational ones.'[55]

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[51] Charles Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy: or, the journal of a tour through those countries, undertaken to collect materials for a general history of music,* 2nd ed. London: T. Becket and Co, 1773. 127-129. Unfortunately Burney does not give a source for this quote, other than stating 'M. de la Lande says that he had from his own mouth the following singular anecdote.'

[52] Burney, *The present state of music in France and Italy,* 129.

[53] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 281.

[54] Gillett, *Musical Women in England',* 95.

[55] Ibid.

Steblin uses Heinrich Heine's description of Paganini in his *Florentinische Nächte* of 1836 as an illustration of the dialogue surrounding the artist, and remarks that 'much of his inspiration was derived from the idea of Paganini as an agent of the devil.'

> It was indeed Paganini himself, whom I then saw for the first time. He wore a dark grey overcoat, which reached to his feet, and made his figure seem very tall. His long black hair fell in neglected curls on his shoulders, and formed a dark frame round the pale, cadaverous face, on which sorrow, genius, and hell had engraved their indestructible lines.[56]

Heine related an account of Paganini's performance, during which the reality of the concert was replaced by a supernatural vision:

> I could scarcely recognize him in the monk's brown dress, which concealed rather than clothed him. With savage countenance half hid by the cowl, waist girt with a cord, and bare feet, Paganini stood, a solitary defiant figure, on a rocky prominence by the sea, and played his violin… Often, when he stretched his long thin arm from the broad monk's sleeve, and swept the air with his bow, he seemed like some sorcerer who commands the elements with his magic wand; and then there was a wild wailing from the depth of the sea, and the horrible waves of blood sprang up… [57]

Paganini was famed for his performance tricks. The most popular of these involved the strings snapping one by one, except the G string, which Paganini would use to continue the piece. Steblin notes that Paganini wrote several pieces to show off this technique, and remarks that 'such a display of virtuosity seemed to be supernatural – aided by the devil – and in fact people claimed to have seen the devil at Paganini's elbow during his performances.'[58] Halpert also references this, citing the pianist Johann Cramer, who claimed to have seen the Devil guiding Paganini's bow arm.[59] Steblin concludes that 'Paganini's influence on the Romantic psyche should not be underestimated'

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[56] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 282.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 283.

[59] Halpert, 'The Devil and the Fiddle', 41.

and suggests that several contemporary visual artists were inspired by his performances, including Rethel, whose depiction of Death had him playing the fiddle on a lone G string.[60]

As late as 1892, anecdotes relating to Paganini were still published, indicating a consistent public interest in the artist. In September 1892, the *Daily News* reported on a Journal by 'Sala' (presumably George Augustus Sala, a prominent journalist of the time), in which he described meeting Paganini:

> "Him I remember well," says Mr. Sala, "Not in Regent Street but at Brighton about 1836, a gaunt, weird man with long black hair and hollow cheeks and flashing eyes. I never see Henry Irving without recalling Paganini to my mind. I can remember vividly the impression created within me by his play. It was that he had got inside his violin a devil, and that the imprisoned fiend-demon was now shrieking, menacing, now supplicating, and now seeking by caressing endearments to obtain his liberty from the magician with the fiddlestick, who was grasping his fiend-tenanted fiddle so firmly by the throat."[61]

The careers of both Paganini and Tartini were both inextricably linked with the supernatural in the popular imagination. Literature – including reviews and discussions – on both was peppered with references to the occult, and this was reflected throughout the arts. In particular, Tartini's 'Devil's trill' story became a hugely popular theme throughout fiction, ballets and plays. Paganini also generated huge interest, and it seems that to some extent he utilised the notion of the occult violin as a marketing strategy, dressing to enhance the role of occult violinist, and utilising extreme and previously unused techniques to demonstrate his skill. From this contemporary source investigation, it is clear the links between the occult and the violin–in particular the devil targeting particularly talented players–would have been very much present in the popular imagination of the nineteenth century.

Morality and socio-musical conventions in nineteenth-century England

Having established that the idea of the occult violin was still present and popular in the nineteenth century in England, it is important to consider nineteenth-century moral values and to examine Gillett's argument that there would have been moral panic over the idea of women playing the violin and leaving themselves open to occult influence. Gillet explains that conceptions of morality

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[60] Steblin, 'Death as a fiddler', 283.

[61] [Unsigned] 'This Morning's News.' *Daily News* 14499 (21 September 1892), n.p.

during the nineteenth century were influenced by the writings of the ancient Greek philosophers:

> The belief that music can exert a morally deleterious influence has ancient precedents in Pythagorean ideas on the unstable nature of the human soul, an instability that resulted from its creation from material less pure than that used to create the cosmos. In his dialogue *Timaeus,* Plato suggests that the soul's unstable nature makes it highly susceptible to the motions that cause sound: thus, while well-ordered music strengthens virtuous propensities, music of a disordered or corrupt nature is morally dangerous.[62]

Gillett suggests these writings would have influenced ideas on morality and music in the nineteenth century, highlighting the 'suspicion with which music was held in some English circles through most of the nineteenth century', which she partially attributes this to the 'Puritan legacy' of a belief in dancing as morally suspect, concluding this 'almost inevitably resulted in a strong animus toward fiddler and his instrument' both in England and on the continent.[63] However, Gillett provides no supporting source material for this argument, such as accounts of or documented sermons or religious literature. By the nineteenth century dancing formed an important social function across all sections of society–as novels of the time frequently attest, and this does not tally with Gillett's account, nor have I been able to find any substantial contemporary accounts that would support this. However, Gillett does reference Richard Leppert's research on musical iconography, which failed to find a single image of women playing the violin during the eighteenth century. Leppert sees the development of the violin in the seventeenth century as representing a 'taming' from its prior use in folk music. Gillett comments that as so much of the classical music written for the violin at this time was technically difficult, it resulted in a professionalisation of the instrument, as the repertoire could not be played by most amateurs. There were exceptions to this though:

> The high-status viol now out of fashion, some male amateurs developed violin skills sufficient to play the "accompanied sonatas" published at this time for keyboard and violin; these were generally easy pieces written for domestic use, in which the violin was the accompanying instrument. In these duets, the violin was always played by a man, the keyboard by a woman.[64]

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[62] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 89.

[63] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 89.

[64] Ibid., 90.

While during the eighteenth century, the violin was not prohibited for gentlemen to play, it was rarely done, due to the technical knowledge and training needed to play the repertoire. As the violin became used more in ensembles, Gillett makes the convincing argument that the instrument's 'diabolical associations' diminished as the seated chamber musician became more prevalent and displaced the popular image of the leader of the dance violinist, 'The group musician is by definition a socialized, cooperative artist, a strong contrast to the charismatic leader of the late-medieval dance of death.'[65] However, depictions of dancing masters still frequently characterised fiddlers as 'fops and seducers, tempting their pupils to excessive love of the sensual pleasure of dance, and endangering female virtue.'[66]

Wider ideas about the place of music in society

Solie's *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* provides a useful discussion around the linked ideas of music and morality in a wider societal context. She explains that music was considered a 'secular religion', which was 'offered to the needy along with the approved forms of Christianity to help them along the road to betterment'.[67] If one of the main roles for music in society was for moral betterment, it can be seen that the violin, with its occult links, might have been considered unsuitable for this role, especially for women.

Nineteenth-century prescriptions of male and female roles were, Solie suggests, formed on ideas of duality and opposites: 'She was intuitive where he was reasonable, artistic where he was pragmatic, nurturing where he was aggressive, delicate where he was robust, domestic and shy where he was gregarious, and so forth.'[68] Right from childhood these roles were ingrained and were continually reinforced in girls and women. Within the musical realm, piano playing was seen as a daughter's duty:

> It was her specific task, as we read in many another etiquette and child-rearing manual, to offset her father's alienated experience of the daily work grind and to provide sufficiently attractive entertainment at home to keep her brothers out of oyster bars

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Word: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 2004), 65.

[68] Ibid., 92.

> and saloons–indeed, the rescue of brothers from the world's temptations became a major issue and was much discussed by the moralists.[69]

In the chapter "'Girling" at the Parlor Piano', Solie discusses the idea of 'girling' - a term borrowed from Judith Butler. Solie explains it thus:

> On the one hand, girling is the social process that forms girls appropriate to the needs of the society they live in; on the other, it is their own enactment–or in Butlerian terms, their performance–of girlhood, both to satisfy familial and social demands on them and, as we shall see, to satisfy needs of their own either to resist those demands or to reassure themselves about their own capacity to fulfill them.[70]

Playing the violin, with its occult links would have disrupted this model and rebelled against social demands and expectations. With strong ideas in place about women's role, life for any women who transgressed the model of 'girlhood' or 'womanhood' would have been difficult. Portraying oneself as a suitable wife was important, as options for unmarried women were few, it was hard for women to earn their own keep, and marriage offered the only real form of security for many women.

Issues of agency

If, as Paula Gillett argues, the notion of the violin as occult instrument contributed to the unspoken prohibition on women's violin playing, a brief exploration of the issue of agency is useful, since many of these legends involve violins possessing their players, or acting as the devil's medium. In particular, it is worth considering whether in the nineteenth-century imagination, the violin was thought to act as an agent of the Devil, or if it had its own agenda.

Eliot Bates work 'The Social Life of Musical Instruments' provides a particularly relevant discussion of agency and instruments. Bates references the use of the occult violin trope in the present day, and briefly discusses the 1998 film *The Red Violin*, which '[cultivates] fatal host-parasitic relations with each violinist that it possesses, while motivating other individuals to steal it, sell it, or otherwise turn to morally evil behaviour,' alongside an 1895 novel, *The Lost Stradivarius,* by J. Meade Falkner, in which a violin gradually possesses its player.[71] Bates remarks that he chose some

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[69] Ibid., 93.

[70] Ibid., 86.

[71] Eliot Bates, 'The Social Life of Musical Instruments,' *Ethnomusicology* 56/3 (Fall, 2012), 363-364.

modern examples, such as *The Red Violin,* to provide a contemporary model of agency for the following reasons:

> To demonstrate the ease with which we can conceive of musical instruments as not only having some degree of agency, but even as protagonists of stories–as actors who facilitate, prevent, or mediate social interaction among other characters. In none of these stories is the violin or accordion symbolic, nor is the instrument unambiguously a metaphor or parable for obsession, evil, jealousy, or other problematic moral-emotional states.[72]

This is an important distinction, which applies as much to the nineteenth century tales discussed previously in this chapter as to the contemporary examples given by Bates. The violin in the tales is not a metaphor for death, evil or the occult, but either acts of its own accord, as protagonist, with its own agenda, *or* acts as an agent or medium for the devil or death. If, as Bates argues, in the present day, we understand and accept the idea of instruments having agency, or acting as protagonists in stories (possibly also in real life–Bates is ambiguous on this point), presumably the same could be said for a nineteenth-century audience.

Bates discusses the idea of instruments *as* culture, how they relate to the society around them, in terms of embodying culture, defining status and how they relate to identity. While in Turkey, Bates became interested in the music and culture of the country, and was advised by Turkish musicians that:

> Simply by holding, playing, and interacting with a saz I would become more Turkish (although other things might be additionally necessary, such as taking a Turkish surname and converting to Islam). Note that the potential of causation went one way. If I played a saz I wouldn't run the risk of rendering it less Turkish; the saz itself contained an exclusive potentiality to impact change. I encountered similar convictions on numerous occasions–that a repetitive physical practice involving certain musical instruments would unequivocally change me as a person.[73]

This gives us a modern-day (albeit non-Western) example of a way in which an instrument might be easily understood to have agency. A contemporary Westernised example might be found by

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[72] Ibid., 364.

[73] Ibid., 386.

substituting 'saz' for 'electric guitar' and 'Turkishness' for 'coolness'. This idea is relatively unproblematic–we can accept the idea of an instrument imparting a cultural identity or value, whether 'Turkishness' or 'coolness'. The nineteenth-century parallel of course, would be found in the violin imparting 'occultness'.

Returning to the idea of instruments imparting morality, Bates' research found evidence of instruments apparently imparting moral values in other modern-day cultures:

> While the saz is capable of imparting Turkishness, the tanbur is capable of bringing moral piety, and as such has seen a renaissance among some of the more observant Muslim youth in Istanbul.[74]

This is an important point, since if it can be believed that an instrument has agency to impart positive moral values, it is difficult to argue that an instrument could not also be seen to be capable of imparting negative moral values. Although these ideas concern different cultures and time periods – twenty-first century Turkey and nineteenth-century England – it illustrates the long-established idea of instruments imparting morality, with the idiom understood and believed across cultural and temporal boundaries. This ties into Jones and Boivin's work on agency, which highlights the lengthy history of ideas of material agency, 'Humans have not been unaware of the transformational properties of the things they make and use and, indeed, such beliefs are, and likely long have been, central to many traditional cosmologies.'[75] The ideas of Alfred Gell, who explored the idea of 'primary' and 'secondary' agents, is relevant here. Gell asserts that objects need to have intentionality to be primary agents, and that therefore objects can only be 'secondary' agents. Boivin and Jones explain this theory as follows: 'objects can act only as media of human social agency, which could be distributed through them', or can only act as passive things, vessels of agency, rather than having an agenda of their own.[76] This is an interesting distinction in the context of the violin, and whether the instrument in the nineteenth century imagination might have been more closely aligned with 'primary' or 'secondary' agents. Were they just a 'vessel of human (or occult) social agency', or did they have their own dark agenda and intentionality?

This is a difficult question, never explicitly discussed in modern texts. However, stories of violins (rather than the devil) possessing players would suggest intentionality, making the

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[74] Bates, 'The Social Life of Musical Instruments,' footnote to p.386.

[75] Andrew Meirion Jones and Nicole Boivin, 'The Malice of Inanimate Objects: Material Agency,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies,* eds. Dan Hicks and Mary C. Beaudry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 338.

[76] Gell 1998 quoted in Jones and Boivin, 'The Malice of Inanimate Objects', 341.

instrument a 'primary' agent. However, it is clear that in many stories, the violin is an 'agent' of Death or the Devil, and a medium through which that character's intentionality is carried out. Although, as Bates points out, some of these questions run the risk of being overthought and self-absorbed, it is worth considering these more philosophical issues; in the context of the occult violin, and ideas about its impact on women players, Bates' arguments are particularly relevant, and offer a perspective on the issue that has not previously been discussed. Bates' research and experiences demonstrate that we can understand and believe in the idea of an instrument imparting culture or cultural identity. In the context of the Saz, (as well as many other instruments), it was possible for a player to strengthen their connection to a cultural community by playing the instrument, as the instrument imparts culture. Meanwhile, it is clear that in some cultures, instruments are believed to impart positive moral values (for example, the discussion of the Tanbur, above). Thinking about mapping Bates' ideas concerning agency onto the eighteenth and nineteenth century violin, this would suggest that the instrument could impart moral values (including negative moral values) and can bestow culture, in this case occult culture.

Conclusions

Gillett's work concludes that the informal prohibition on women's violin playing was 'the result of satanic and other unsettling supernatural associations juxtaposed with an almost visceral expectation that this female-gendered instrument should have a male master.'[77] However, there is no tangible evidence in eighteenth or nineteenth reviews of women violinists or discussions around their activities that supports this argument, and it is therefore difficult to accurately assess the extent to which links between the violin and the occult might have influenced ideas about female violin playing. However, it is arguable that a range of contributing factors concerned with the long history of the violin's associations with the supernatural may well have influenced public opinion around the appropriateness of the instrument for women. As outlined in the previous chapter, it is important to consider any potential distinctions between the broader situation in Europe and a specifically English context. The links between the violin and the occult were widespread across Europe, and the prevalence of the trope in nineteenth-century English literature demonstrates that this extended to England as well. However, the ways in which the trope interacted with social conventions and ideas about morality may well have differed across countries, depending on each culture's social norms and moral codes. The discussion of morality and socio-musical conventions in relation to the violin which are discussed in this chapter are

[77] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 98.

specific to an English context, and may not necessarily have directly translated in the same way to other European contexts.

There is an undeniably long history of the idea of violin as the instrument of the devil or death in folklore and it appears that this association was still very much present during the nineteenth century. The extent and longevity of the idiom is evident in the number of folktales featuring the violin and the supernatural, and it is clear that this was still in evidence throughout the arts in the nineteenth century, with the tales updated in popular stories, the theatre and poetry, supported by iconographical representation of the violin as instrument of death or devil. In particular, the recurring theme of the occult violin in theatrical productions in the mid-nineteenth century indicates a public fascination with the subject. However, the common storylines of moral corruption, and especially the violin as an instrument of seduction (with the devil's help), may well have contributed to a public feeling that the violin was an instrument respectable women should be wary of. Modern scholarship on agency supports the theory that there may well have been concerns about the violin's potential for imbuing the player with aspects of the occult and the transmission of supernatural power or corruption of moral values. Female violin playing would therefore also have disrupted the nineteenth-century role of women as moral gate-keepers.

While male players such as Tartini and Paganini (both early masters of marketing) capitalised on the dark stories that followed them, this may have further reinforced the idea that the violin was not a suitable instrument for women. The success of Tartini and Paganini in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries meant that the links between the violin and the devil were still very much present in the public consciousness in the nineteenth century, albeit with a distinct air of dark glamour attached, rather than a god-fearing wariness.

Having explored various aspects of the argument, including the history of the occult violin in folktales, the evolution of these into the nineteenth-century arts and the adoption of the idiom by male players, it seems likely that the nineteenth-century population would have had an ingrained understanding of the supernatural-violin trope. Although this may not have been explicitly articulated in connection with women players of the instrument, the idiom would have been very much in the public consciousness, and it seems likely that this may have contributed to the sense of unease or unnaturalness that some critics and writers appear to have felt in relation to women playing the violin.

Preface to Chapter 3:

The turn of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries

The period around the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries was characterised by extensive change. The French Revolution in 1789–99 sparked turmoil across Europe which had lasting economic, social and cultural implications. Meanwhile, the late eighteenth century saw a shift in the parameters of the female realm, and the creation of a socio-musical climate that was more conducive to female performance; opportunities for women expanded, but this also resulted in increased debate about women's place in society and musical culture.

Discourse around the role and nature of women

The end of the eighteenth century saw a shift in women's musical activities. Marcia Citron argues this as a result of 'contemporary socio-political trends that theoretically granted women equal status in legal rights and education,' which broadened their musical education and opportunities.[1] Katherine B. Clinton describes a 'furious debate' across late-eighteenth-century Europe around 'the nature of women, the place they should occupy in society, and what political rights, if any, they should enjoy'.[2] Citron explains that eighteenth-century thought held that it was, 'unnecessary and even dangerous for women to acquire knowledge, as such knowledge could only detract from women's true calling of wife and mother. A woman's role would be especially undermined if she applied her knowledge in a professional pursuit.'[3] Citron suggests that it was these attitudes which prevented Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel from initially pursuing a performing career.[4] However, the end of the period, around the turn of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, saw a shift in attitudes, resulting in a relaxing of ideas about appropriate music making for women, broadening the scope of their musical activities. Patriarchal attitudes were challenged, and discourse on the topic was published, such as the publication in 1792 of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of*

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[1] Martha J. Citron, 'Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,' in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950,* ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986), 225. However, it is not fully clear whether Citron's discussion relates to Europe generally or to a country-specific context.

[2] Katherine B. Clinton, 'Femme et Philosophie: Enlightenment Origins of Feminism,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8, no. 3 (1975), 283.

[3] Citron, 'Women and the Lied', 226.

[4] Ibid., 227.

Woman, which argued for equality between the sexes, and that a lack of access to education was the cause of women's perceived inferiority to men.[5]

The rise of the novel

Women's musical lives in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries took place against the changing context of the broader female world, as women's musical roles evolved alongside shifts throughout the arts and society. The rise of the novel was particularly significant in expanding the female sphere out of the private domestic realm and into the public, while amplifying women's voices and lived experiences. Elizabeth Morgan's work explains that improved literacy rates at the end of the eighteenth century resulted in 'a boom in published female authors'.[6] The advent of publicly successful women writers was also important in breaking down barriers to professional life; Morgan notes that that as women started to publish under their own names around the turn of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, 'The public nature of their success ran contrary to the traditional view of a woman's role outside of the home during this period'.[7] This provided a valuable model for women throughout the arts to emulate.

The consumption of both music and novels formed part of women's domestic recreational pursuits, and they were therefore inextricably linked, heightened by the use within novels of music as a plot device to convey key scenes or character traits. Morgan explores the idea of a 'new woman' at the turn of the nineteenth century, who she describes as being developed by female novelists as 'a new feminine ideal', who 'called into question many of the most patriarchal assumptions of late Georgian-era culture.[8] Female novelists including Maria Hester Park and Maria Edgeworth, 'challenged the existence of separate spheres,' and Morgan's work draws connections between this and the increased popularity of the accompanied sonata, which she argues:

> Provided a venue for real women to become the "new woman" As they took the position of ensemble leader, shaping phrases and introducing musical themes, executing rapid scales and arpeggios, they embodied the confidence, intellectual prowess, and powers of reason of a new feminine archetype.[9]

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[5] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). First published in 1792.

[6] Elizabeth Morgan, 'The Accompanied Sonata and the Domestic Novel in Britain at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,' *19th Century Music* 36, no. 2 (2012), 90.

[7] Ibid., 90.

[8] Ibid., 99.

[9] Ibid.,100.

Novels based around the 'new woman' therefore provided valuable role models who demonstrated an increased level of authority and intellect, which was commensurate with the parallel increase in the popularity of the accompanied sonata, which similarly provided a creative outlet for women to display these traits.

The middle-class women who wrote or read novels and performed accompanied sonatas within the home were not the same women who forged careers as professional musicians. However, the expansion of their world, and changing attitudes to the nature and scope of women's activities, eased the path for women to pursue careers as solo instrumentalists.

Shifts in pedagogy

Broader shifts in the way that music was learned may have started to make the violin accessible to women during the late eighteenth century. David Golby's work on violin pedagogy during the period highlights the impact of the explosion in tutor method books during the eighteenth century, arguing that this resulted in a "'do-it-yourself" movement in violin instruction'.[10] It is possible that behind closed doors, this may have offered an opportunity for some women to learn the violin via self-instruction. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century diaries and letters reveal occasional aristocratic women who played the violin, such as Lady Charlotte Campbell Bury, who wrote in her diary in 1811 that 'I had nothing to do but to take to my books and my violin'.[11] The advent of tutor method books may therefore answer the question of how such women learned the instrument. As outlined in chapter one, this would negate the need for a male violin teacher, and may have aided in making the study of the instrument more acceptable.

As outlined in the introduction to this work, the women violinists who performed in England during the late-eighteenth to nineteenth centuries all came from continental Europe; a combination of educational opportunities on the continent and a more geographically mobile contingent of musical artists around Europe seem likely to have resulted in the arrival in London of these female artists. The Venetian *Ospedali* schools and the music schools established in Germany and France during the eighteenth century were, as Nancy Reich puts it, 'forerunners of the nineteenth-century conservatoires', which offered valuable training to female musicians. Meanwhile, John Rink notes that the French Revolution not only resulted in 'a radical realignment of the social

[10] David J. Golby, 'Violin Pedagogy in England during the first half of the Nineteenth Century, or *The Incompleat Tutor for the Violin,*' in *Nineteenth-Century British Music Studies* (Vol. 1), ed. Bennett Zon (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 89-90.

[11] Lady Charlotte Susan Maria Campbell Bury, 1775-1861, Diary of Lady Charlotte Susan Maria Campbell Bury, July, 1811, in *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth Interspersed with Original Letters from...Queen Caroline [Amelie Elizabeth, Consort of George IV], vol. 1.* London, England: H. Colburn, 1838, 216.

hierarchy, especially in France, but also successive population displacements towards Europe's key urban centres'.[12] Similarly, John Rink's work on the profession of music during the first half of the nineteenth century suggests that London provided a conducive environment for female players, 'Dominated by foreigners (whose training and skills were generally superior), the profession in late eighteenth-century London embraced Jewish families and women, to whom most other occupations were closed'[13] Linking these three aspects together, it seems likely that women finishing formalised musical education in Europe at the end of the century graduated into a more geographically transitory musical culture, including a movement by artists towards London, which appears to have offered a conducive environment for female musicians to perform and live.

However, broader musical changes and shifting cultures across the arts at the start of the nineteenth century had ramifications for female performers. Margaret Campbell's work paints a despondent picture of life for a soloist at around this time, and highlights the impact of changing patterns of patronage:

> The beginning of the nineteenth century saw a decline in private patronage. Although a few of the nobility still maintained their own orchestras, there was little support for the solo performer. An artist had either to find someone with money, or foot the bill himself….For instance, at the Paris Conservatoire there was never any question of anything as vulgar as a fee being paid to a soloist, however eminent….Inevitably, the implications of the system were echoed in the box office. The complete indifference of the early nineteenth-century public to anything but virtuoso tricks on the violin meant that concert-giving was a hazardous occupation. Concerts were by subscription only, so the sponsor had to be sought out before tickets could be purchased.[14]

Carving out a career as a soloist was clearly challenging for male players, and this would have been amplified for their female contemporaries. In particular, women may have faced additional challenges with regard to navigating and negotiating payment, likely finding themselves in weaker bargaining positions when negotiating fees. However, Campbell's description of audiences responding to novelties and 'tricks' suggests that the novelty of being a female player might well have acted as an advantage.

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[12] John Rink, 'The Profession of Music', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 57. However, it is not clear which instruments the 'women' referred to by Rink might have played, and whether this included female violinists.

[13] Ibid., 56.

[14] Margaret Campbell, *The great violinists* (London: Granada, 1980), 53.

There is disagreement in modern scholarship about the practicalities of pursuing a professional musical career in England at the turn of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. Carol Neuls-Bates asserts that, 'the expansion of concert life in the late eighteenth century made public concertizing and touring financially attractive.'[15] However, John Rink's work aligns more with Campbell's perspective, highlighting the financial precarity for musicians around 1800 through a description of 'an increasingly competitive marketplace, which conferred new freedoms but also caused greater vulnerability'.[16] It therefore seems likely that although there may have been an expansion of opportunities for musicians, with the prospect of lucrative earnings once work was secured, this was not always guaranteed, and competition for the available work would have been fierce. Rink emphasises that 'illness and loss of technique were constant threats'. For female musicians, pregnancy would be an additional threat; although temporary, a pregnancy and childbirth would necessitate a break from performing which may have been financially difficult, as well as the addition of children exacerbating any existing pressures on finances and time.

Meanwhile, Simon McVeigh's description of the varied careers of professional violinists working in late-eighteenth-century London suggests additional challenges for women players:

> Many of the principal violinists organised concert series or benefits. No doubt most were also teachers–not only of the violin to gentlemen, but also of singing and the harpsichord to ladies. Nearly all published solos or concertos for the violin, and many also produced chamber and orchestral music. A few wrote a considerable amount of vocal music.[17]

What McVeigh describes, we might recognise as a 'portfolio career' today. However, this type of convention for musical careers would have posed additional challenges to female musicians pursuing a career as a soloist in the late eighteenth century. Firstly, the organisation of concert series or benefits was dependent on the player being part of an already-established network of musicians; women performers may well have struggled to infiltrate some of these pre-existing networks, or may have taken longer to successfully integrate themselves into them. Secondly, the avenue of teaching was not open to women musicians in the same way that it was to their male counterparts. As outlined in chapter one, most music masters were male, and there was prestige

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[15] Carol Neuls-Bates, *Women in Music: an Anthology of Source Readings from the Middle Ages to the Present* 2nd ed. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 85.

[16] Rink, 'The Profession of Music'64-65.

[17] Simon McVeigh. *The violinist in London's concert life, 1750-1784 : Felice Giardini and his contemporaries*. New York: Garland,1989. 118-119.

attached to employing a high-status male musician for one's household. Women may therefore have found it challenging to find employment as teachers, as the comparative lack of repute may well have negated the perceived safety of employing a female tutor. Meanwhile, as women faced barriers in accessing formal training in harmony, counterpoint and composition, limited numbers of them were likely to be in the position of publishing their own musical works, and as with female authors, there may have been additional social implications of having one's name attached to a publication in the public domain. Women may therefore have faced increased difficulty in maintaining a solo career which was dependent on these additional supporting sources of income and status-boosting activities. That is not to say that female performers did not explore these avenues, but they would have posed additional practical and financial challenges to pursuing a solo career.

Chapter 3:

Women violinists in late eighteenth-century England: Louise Gautherot and Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen

Introduction

During the nineteenth century, violinists such as Maria and Teresa Milanollo, followed by Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso, forged careers as professional violinists, despite musical and social barriers which typically prevented women from playing the instrument. Much of the literature on women violinists credits these players as being the catalyst for change in respect to female violin playing. However a handful of women violinists from Continental Europe did perform earlier than this in England, and examining the lives, careers and reception of these players is vital in fully understanding attitudes towards women and the violin during the nineteenth century.

This chapter discusses two of the best known female performers of the violin in the late eighteenth century; Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen (1735/45-1818) and Louise (or Louisa) Gautherot (c.1762-1808), both of whom performed in England.[1] These women's social, familial and musical backgrounds are explored, alongside contextualisation of their English performances within their careers, and an examination of critical responses to these performances.

The extent to which these women's contributions to the history of female violin playing has been overlooked is attested through the comparative lack of scholarship on their lives. For example, there are not entries for Louise Gautherot in either popular sources such as *Wikipedia* or academic sources such as Grove *Music Online*. This is indicative of the lack of research interest in female violinists before 1800. The Sophie Drinker Institut website has the most comprehensive information on Gautherot, but lists her as a violinist *and* singer.[2] The Drinker Institut site gives a birthdate for Gautherot of around 1763 in France, and a death date of 1808 in London, meaning that she would have been in her mid-late twenties during her London performances in the late 1780s and early 1790s. The Drinker Institut article bears a significant resemblance to Warwick

[1] Although the birthdate generally cited for Gautherot is around 1763, my research indicates that 1762 is the more probable date. This is discussed later in the work.

[2] Volker Timmermann, 'Gautherot, Louise,' *Europäische Instrumentalistinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts,* undated, accessed Feb 14, 2018, http://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/cms/index.php/gautherot-louise. Although Timmermann lists her as a singer, the rest of the entry on Gautherot makes no reference to this, and I have found no evidence to suggest she performed as a singer.

Lister's short biography in his discussion of Gautherot in *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti.*[3] Lister credits Gautherot with introducing Viotti's compositions to London audiences, and describes her as 'one of Viotti's most indefatigable interpreters'.[4] Lister includes a table of the entirety of her French performances and of her London performances of Viotti.[5]

Rather more is written about Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, although, as Simon McVeigh notes, aspects of the discourse are often characterised by a preoccupation with elements other than her violin playing;

> Maddalena Laura Sirmen (née Lombardini) is well known to scholars of the violin on two accounts–as the recipient of Tartini's famous letter on violin playing and as a prominent woman violinist in Paris and London. She is also remembered for Burney's disparaging comments on her translation to opera singing.[6]

However, Lombardini Sirmen is well documented in most generalist sources, for example, there is dedicated Wikipedia page for her. In academic scholarship, she is listed in *Grove Music Online,* and was the subject of a 1933 article by Marion Scott, and a book researched by Jane Baldauf-Berdes, (written up after her death by Elsie Arnold), which was published in 2002.[7] Although the Baldauf-Berdes' research is thorough, the tone of the book is not particularly scholarly, as Arnold's writing too often falls back on presumption and projection. Suzanne Forsberg has also highlighted issues with Berdes' wider work on Lombardini Sirmen, specifically relating to Berdes' edition of Lombardini Sirmen's violin concertos and accompanying notes, where the interpretation of her birth date is problematic and differs from the generally accepted date of 1735:

> Berdes...does not speculate on the possible origin of this date, instead she concludes from her own research that the musician was born on 13 December 1745. Her claim is based on a volume of Venetian baptismal records encompassing the years 1744-58.

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[3] Warwick Lister, *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 117-118.

[4] Lister, *Amico,* 117-118.

[5] Lister's table should be treated with caution; my own research uncovered several discrepancies between this and contemporary London press listings of performances.

[6] Simon McVeigh, 'Reviews of Music: Review of *Three Violin Concertos*, by Maddalena Laura Lombardini Sirmen, edited by Jane L. Berdes', *Music & Letters* 74, no.3 (1993), 473-474.

[7] Marion M. Scott, 'Maddalena Lombardini, Madame Syrmen,' *Music & Letters* 14, no.2 (1933); Elsie Arnold and Jane Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen: eighteenth-century composer, violinist, and businesswoman* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

> Although the Lombardini Sirmen entry bears the date 13 December 1750 Berdes maintains that "the document's placement within the chronologically ordered baptismal register . . . ensure[s] 1745 as the year of birth" (p. xvii, n. 4). In a more recent publication (Jane L. Baldauf Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525-1855*, 146), Berdes states that the baptismal certificate "was altered by an unknown hand," possibly to reinforce a claim that she was a ten-year-old violinist in 1760. It is curious that she did not include this information in the edition under review. Moreover, she could have made a stronger case for the 1745 birth date had she brought to the foreground a Venetian document from the years 1816-19 (Archivio Storicio del Commune, Rubrica Alfabetica dei Decessi Avvenuti nella Città de Venezia) that records the composer's death on 15 May 1818 at the age of seventy-two. She relegates this important evidence to a later, unrelated footnote (p. xix, n.33).[8]

There is therefore scope for more research on both Lombardini Sirmen and Gautherot; little research into Gautherot's life and career has taken place, while much of the existing work on Lombardini-Sirmen is in need of a more critical level of investigation. This chapter adds much-needed biographical details for Gautherot to the existing literature on women violinists, and considers the nature and significance of the reception of Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen's playing in London in the closing decades of the eighteenth century..

Louise Gautherot

Louise Gautherot (née Deschamps) was born around 1763 in France. Little is known about her early life, and her exact date of birth has been lost.[9] Gautherot's entry in *Europäische Instrumentalistinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* lists her as 'Violinistin und Sängerin', stating that she studied with Nicolas Capron, and made her first professional appearance in 1774 at the Paris *Concerts Spirituel*.[10] She performed numerous times in Paris between 1774-79, followed by a five year break between 1779-1784, when she appears not to have performed, but did marry; Lister's research notes a gap in her performances, with a name change in concert listening from

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[8] Suzanne Forsberg, 'Review: Review of *Three Violin Concertos* by Maddalena Laura Lombardini Sirmen, Jane L. Berdes', *Notes* 50, no.3 (1994), 1173-4.

[9] Despite extensive examination of records available online, my research failed to find a Louise/a Deschamps born in 1763. The closest is a Louise Françoise Deschamps, born to François and Renée Levallet, baptised on 21st January 1762 in Plénée-Jugon, Côtes-d'Armor. The name matches that given on the baptismal records for the children born in Soho in the early 1800s (see footnote 11), which list the mother as being 'Louisa Francoise'.

[10] Timmermann, 'Gautherot, Louise.'

'Deschamps' to 'Gautherot' on her reemergence.[11] It is likely that Gautherot's performance break and marriage are linked; either she stopped performing when she married, or when she started nearing a marriageable age, to ensure she appeared a respectable marriage prospect. The exact date of the marriage is not known, and a marriage record has so far proved elusive; but London Parish records suggest her husband was Jean (sometimes anglicised to John) Gautherot (b.?-d.1829).[12] A marriage record for the Gautherots could potentially answer several significant questions about how Louise's marriage related to her career, for example whether her husband was also a musician, and whether his social status or occupation indicate that he might have been sympathetic to his wife continuing her career. The motivations for Louise Gautherot recommencing performing after marriage are unclear; if the John Gautherot who died in 1829 *was* her husband, this would rule out her having returning to her career through financial need due to his death or the breakdown of the marriage. It is therefore likely that either her husband was supportive of her continuing a performing career, or that dire financial straits for the family necessitated a return to the concert platform. Gautherot appears to have successfully combined a performance career with motherhood, although she seems to have had her children relatively late in life, around the age of forty. Baptismal records indicate that she had a son, John French Gautherot (b.7th March 1800) and a daughter, Elizabeth Camilla Gautherot (b.16th October 1802).

Performances prior to arrival in England

Details of Gautherot's performances in Paris are elusive, however, Warwick Lister's *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti* includes some information on this period of her life.[13] In the five years following her first appearance at the *Concert Spirituel* in 1774, she performed there a dozen or so times.[14] After she married, Gautherot's first documented appearance was on 24th December 1784, when she performed a concerto by Capron at a *Concert Spirituel*. She made two appearances at *Concerts Spirituel* the following year in March and December, on both occasions playing a concerto by Giornovichi. She returned for three appearances at the same series in April of the following year,

[11] Lister, *Amico,* 117.

[12] 'Jean Baptiste Gautherot' and 'Louisa Francoise' were listed as parents on the birth certificates of John French Gautherot, born on 7th March 1800 and Elizabeth Camilla Gautherot, born on 16th October 1802, both of whom were christened in the Parish of St Anne, Soho. A 'Louisa Francoise Gautherd' is listed as being buried in the parish of St Anne, Soho in 1808, which corresponds with the known year of death for Louise Gautherot. John Gautherot is also listed in the parish registers of St Anne, Westminster, as owning land between 1801-1809. I suspect there may have been earlier children, due to the gap between the Gautherot's marriage and the birth of John and Elizabeth. This might also further explain the gap in Gautherot's career between 1779-84.

[13] Lister, *Amico,* 42.

[14] Ibid., 117.

again playing a Giornovichi concerto. In 1787 her appearances at the series demonstrated a slightly more diverse repertoire, including concerti by La Mothes on 7th April, Viotti on 27th May and 7th June, Giornovichi on 15th August and Viotti again on 1st November.

London performances

Gautherot's first English performance as a soloist took place on the 9th February 1789 at a Hanover Square 'Professional Concert'.[15] This performance was of particular significance, as it 'appears to have been the first time Viotti's music was performed in public in London.'[16] Gautherot followed this with weekly appearances (27 Feb–3 April 1789) at the Friday 'Oratorios at play house prices' series at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, where Gautherot usually played at the end of the second part. Alongside this weekly commitment, she played in at least two of the Hanover Square professional concerts, and numerous benefit concerts.

Gautherot's last English concert of the 1789 season appears to have been on 22nd May, with her return advertised for the 19th February 1790 (she returned to France in the intervening period, appearing at least once in Paris). The surviving advertisements suggest that Gautherot made fewer appearances in London during 1790 than in the preceding year. Lister explains that Gautherot performed at three of the 'Oratorios at play house prices', alongside two or three appearances at the 'Grand selection of sacred music from the performances in Westminster abbey' series at Covent Garden. My own research has identified three further appearances, a professional concert on the 12th April at Hanover Square, Gautherot's own benefit concert at Hanover Square on 7th May, and Mrs. Mountain's benefit concert on 13th May at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.[17] These benefit concerts were dependent on social connections between musicians and were usually reciprocal, with the same group of players often performing at each others' benefits.

The number of Gautherot's English performances in 1791 diminished further; records for only three concerts could be found: a professional concert at Hanover Square on 21st February, a Miscellaneous concert for the benefit of decayed musicians at the King's Theatre, Pantheon on 24th February, and Salomon's concert at Hanover Square on 11 March, where she performed with

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[15] [Classified Ads.] *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London) no.4949. February 6 1789.

[16] Lister, *Amico,* 118.

[17] See [Classified Ads] *World* (London) 1006. March 24 1790 for Gautherot's Benefit; [Classified Ads] *World* (London) 1042. May 6 1790. for Mountain's Benefit; [Classified Ads] *World* (London) 1021. April 12 1790 for the professional concert at Hanover Square.

Haydn. Haydn directed from the harpsichord, and 'compose[d] for every night a new piece of music.'[18] Gautherot did not perform in England during 1792, but did spend a season in Dublin.[19]

In 1793, Gautherot played five London concerts in the 'Sacred music at play house prices' series between 15th February-6th March. It may be significant that there are no records of concerts other than these, especially that she did not play in any benefit concerts; this could indicate that she had fallen out of favour with other musicians. This trend continued further in 1794, with only one documented performance, on 4th April; this was a benefit concert for the harpist Madame De Laval at Hanover Square.

The available newspaper advertisements and reviews therefore imply a decrease in Gautherot's concert activities. However, the absence of documentation of further concerts does not necessarily mean that she was not playing during this time. It is possible, for example, that she may have performed in concerts at private houses that were not advertised to the general public or consequently reviewed in the press. The scope of her activities outside England is also unclear, it is possible she was performing more extensively abroad (for example, in Paris), but an exploration of French sources is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a notice in the *Morning Post* in 1794 suggests that Gautherot had been unable to play due to ill health:

> Madame GAUTHEROT, so eminently distinguished for her performance on the Violin, is thoroughly recovered from her indisposition which prevented her from appearing in public. We are surprized to find talent like hers not employed at present, for the amusement of the public and the COGNOSCIENTI.[20]

It seems likely that this 'indisposition' was responsible for Gautherot's reduced performing activities in the mid 1790s. There was a clear tapering off of Gautherot's concert career in England, from the busy schedule of her first year performing in 1789, to her single performance in 1794, her last year of playing. Despite remaining in London until her death in 1808 at the age of forty five, Gautherot did not perform in England again. It is possible that the 'indisposition' referred to by *The Morning Post* was a pregnancy, and that she ceased performing due to the demands of family, or that a long-term illness or injury prevented a continued concert career. It is also possible that the 'indisposition' was incidental, and that following an initial surge of interest, once the novelty of a female performer had worn off, it was difficult for Gautherot to sustain a concert career.

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[18] F. G. E., 'The Haydn Centenary,' *The Musical Times,* 50, no. 795 (05, 1909), 297-300.

[19] Timmermann, 'Gautherot, Louise'.

[20] [Unsigned] 'News' *Morning Post* (London) no.6518. March 12 1794.

Repertoire

As was typical of concert advertising of the time, most of Gautherot's newspaper listings were vague, stating 'a concerto on the violin', 'a solo', or similarly scant information. This may be reflective of late eighteenth-century music criticism and advertisement; music criticism was still in its infancy, and was often not allocated a huge amount of space in the press, with a resultant lack of detail. Reviews tended to be very brief, and identifying specific pieces of music does not seem to have been a serious concern. This, alongside last-minute programming decisions, may also account of the lack of detail in many advertisements. However, the vagueness around solo repertoire may have reflected broader aesthetic ideas; the long nineteenth century saw a shift towards the veneration of 'serious', high art forms such as symphonic works, and it is possible that even at this relatively early stage, the lack of detail in advertisement and reviews of solo instrumental works were reflective of a marginalisation of this repertoire. Simon McVeigh makes reference to 'the supposedly vacuous nature of the solo concerto' and explains:

> 'Though the solo concerto was everywhere…it was not universally accepted as a serious genre. For some critics the concerto was by its very nature superficial, a parade of virtuoso tricky, thin in texture or shallow in melody, over-dependent on external nature effects or national colour. As such, it could easily be derided as a regrettable example of the trivialising effect of modern, crowd-pleasing concerts, to be unfavourably contrasted with the nobler aspirations of Corellian *stile antico* counterpoint.'[21]

At Gautherot's first London concert on 9 February 1789, she played a Viotti concerto, and Lister notes that 'This appears to have been the first time Viotti's music was performed in public in London.'[22] On the 27th February she again played a Viotti Concerto. She also performed chamber music, much of which appears to have been replicated across concerts. On the 13 April 1789, at the 'Grand Miscellaneous Concert for the benefit of the fund for decayed musicians' held at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, she played a 'Trio for two violins and violoncello', although unfortunately

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[21] Simon McVeigh, 'Concerto of the Individual,' in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, ed. Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 599-600.

[22] Lister, *Amico,* 118.

the two other players are not mentioned. Warwick Lister states that 'The trios by Viotti performed in London would have been from the set of six, wIII:1-6, published in 1783-86.'[23]

On the 24th April 1789, she played a 'Concertante for two violins' with Mr. Cramer at Cramer's benefit at Hanover Square. The pair also played a 'Concertante for two violins' by Davaux at a Hanover Square concert on the 1st May 1789, presumably the same piece. On this occasion they were also joined by Mr. Smith on 'cello for a Trio by Viotti. On 8th May 1789, at Harrison's benefit, Gautherot and Cramer again played a Viotti Trio, although the cellist was not mentioned in advertisements. It seems likely that this was the Viotti Trio played on the 1st May. It is significant that after being in England for less than three months, Gautherot was invited to play alongside eminent male performers of the day, and indicates that she was well thought of by her fellow musicians.

A little more detail around repertoire was given for Gautherot's 1790 concerts, which reveals the playing of a Viotti concerto on February 19th at an oratorio concert and on April 9th at the New Musical Fund concert. Meanwhile, at Gautherot's benefit concerto on the 13th May, her advertised programme was a Viotti concerto, and a concerto for two violins by Davaux, which she played with Salomon. At Mrs Mountain's benefit on May 13, she played a duet for violin and tenor with Mr. Mountain, as well as an unnamed solo concerto.

There is only evidence of advertisements for three Gautherot appearances in 1791, two of which were advertised as 'Concerto violin'. However, the advertisements for the Miscellaneous concert at the King's Theatre on 24th February reveal that she played a Viotti trio for two violins and cello, with Mr. Griesbach and Signor Sperati.[24] Lister states that at Salomon's first concert on 11th March, which Haydn attended, Gautherot played a Viotti concerto. Lister suggests 'This may have been the first time Haydn heard a performance of one of Viotti's concertos.'[25] The other music performed included a 'New Grand Overture' by Haydn, directed by him from the harpsichord.

All of Gautherot's 1793 performances were advertised as 'concerto on the violin', but her single appearance in 1794 is particularly interesting; the concert was Madame De Laval's benefit, and she played a concertanti for two violins by Viotti with with Henriette Larrivée, the French violinist, composer, pianist, and sister of Madame De Laval.[26] Although it might be imagined that a

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[23] Ibid.

[24] [Classified Ads] *Star* (London) 879. February 19 1791.

[25] Lister, *Amico,* 118.

[26] Bonnie Shaljean and Jessica R. Suchy-Pilalis, 'Delaval [de la Valle, Delavel, De Laval, etc.], Madame,' *Grove Music Online*. 2001.

performance by a pair of female violinists would be a popular attraction, there appears to have been little (if any) critical response.

The following example excerpts from Viotti concerti written in the late 1880s include extended passages of position work, high, technically challenging passagework, triple stops and large string crossings at speed, as well as calling for a variety of bowstrokes such as martelé.[27] While it is not clear whether either of these concerti were played by Gautherot, they give some indication of the technical demands of Viotti's writing during this period and Gautherot's playing ability.

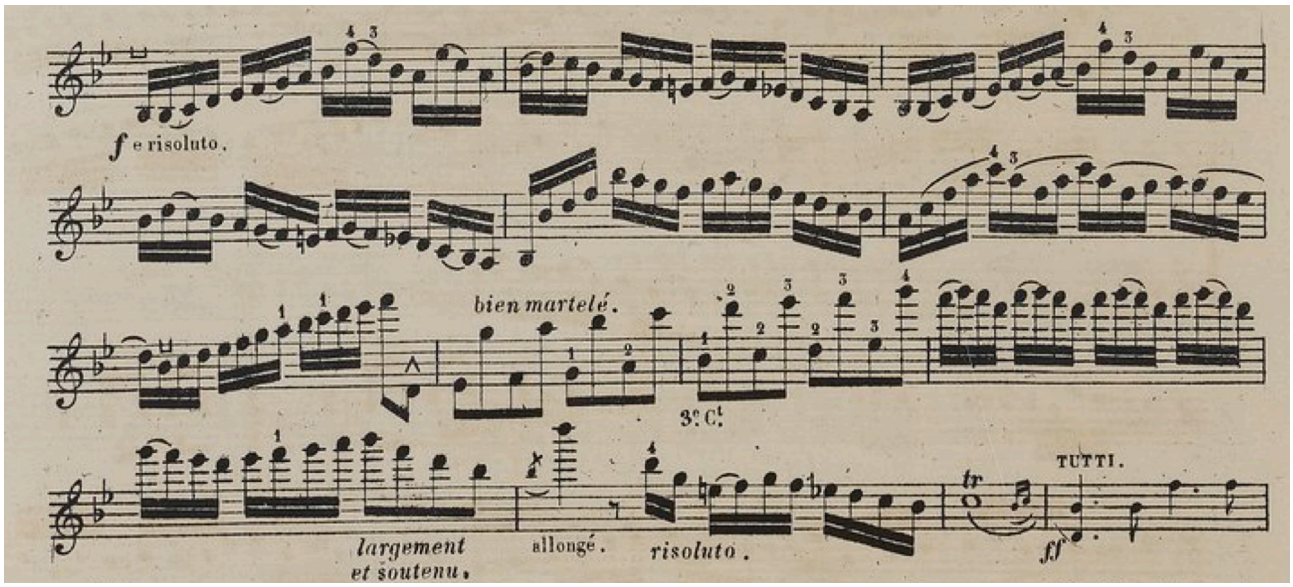

Fig. 3.1: Viotti, Violin Concerto No.12 in B-flat major (1787–8), first movement

[27] Dates of composition are taken from Chappell White and Warwick Lister, 'Viotti, Giovanni Battista.' *Grove Music Online*. 2001.3.

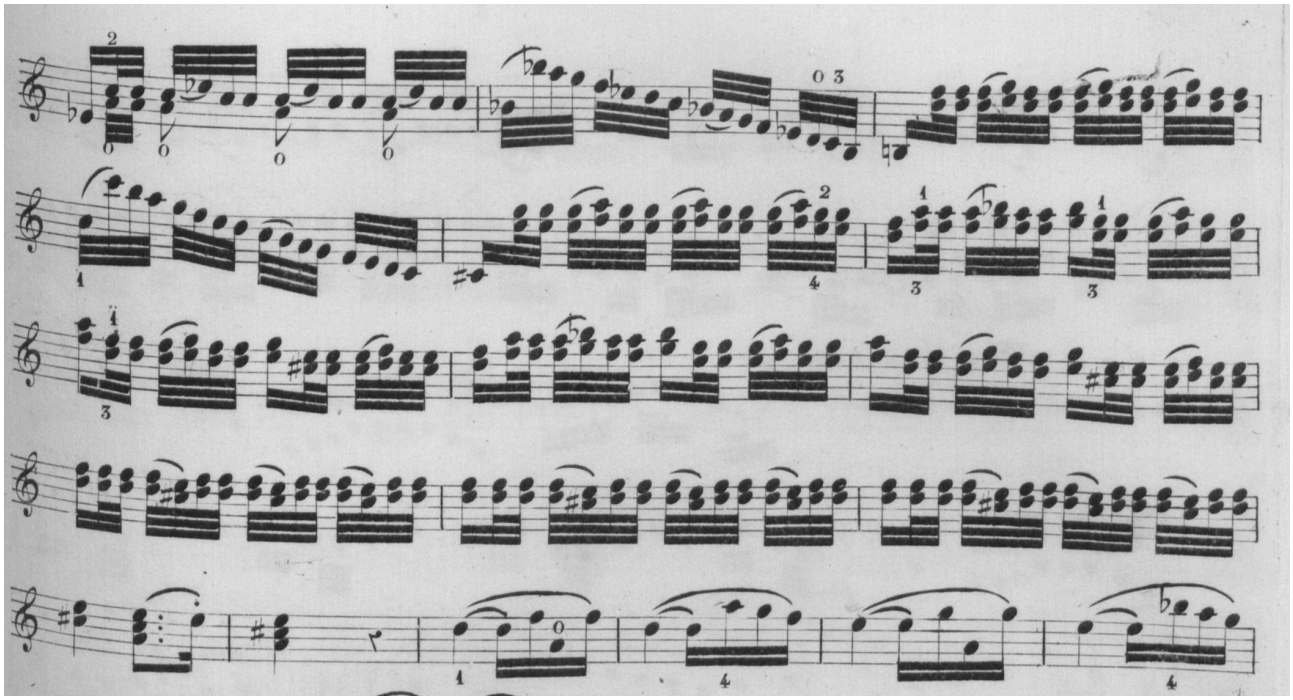

Fig. 3.2: Viotti, Violin Concerto No.14 in A minor (1788–9), third movement

Critical reception from continental Europe

Gautherot's reception on the continent was positive, but the language used indicated her success was at least partially due to her novelty status. A letter from Paris, dated May 8th and published in June 1787 in London's *Public Advertiser* remarks 'At the Spiritual Concert last night a Madame Gautherot astonished the audience with her wonderful execution on the violin.'[28] Later that year, a Parisian correspondent for London's *World and Fashionable Advertiser* reported:

> A *female* Performer on the *violin*–Madame GAUTHEROT–who is much to be praised. Her music is good, and she executes it well, both as to brilliancy and tone. In short, her report is in the best style that can be, viz. that of expression.–And this from a reporter, who has heard every violin, these thirty years. Of course, even Madame *Syrmen* and Miss *Wathen*–who was a scholar of *Hay*–who was the scholar of *Giardini.*[29]

[28] [Unsigned] 'News' *Public Advertiser* (London), no.16550, June 6 1787.

[29] [Unsigned] 'News' *World and Fashionable Advertiser* (London) 212, September 6 1787.

Although the letter writer's reference to being 'astonished' presumably pertained to Gautherot's gender, and the unusual sight of a woman playing the violin, the *World and Fashionable Advertiser* review was remarkably free of gendered language, and although not engaging in depth with her playing, was superficially positive. However, it significant that the 'express[ive]' aspect of her playing was praised over her technical skill.

Critical reception in London

Many reviews of Gautherot's London performances describe a large fashionable audience. For example, a review from 1789 remarked 'The first Oratorio at this Theatre was attended last night by an audience highly numerous and splendid'.[30] Another example from 1790 commented that 'The house was extremely full of elegant company.'[31] However, it is worth noting that many of Gautherot's appearances were at large concerts with numerous performers, so this does not automatically indicate a large public interest in Gautherot. The reaction of London audiences to Gautherot's playing seems to have been mainly positive. However, many reviews of the time described performers fleetingly, making it difficult to gain a true sense of public and critical reactions to players. A typical example from a 1790 concert rehearsal reads, 'Mad. GAUTHEROT played a concerto of Viotti in a wonderful manner!'[32]

The majority of reviews that explicitly mentioned Gautherot described her in favourable terms. One example from 1789 remarked that, 'The mention of the wonderful talents of Madame Gautherot, on the violin, ought not to be omitted, - talents which received the unanimous applause of the Nobility and Gentry at the Professional Concert.'[33] Another from the same year stated that "The concerto on the violin was so exquisite in tone and execution, that Madame GAUTHEROT may, without any hyperbolic encomiums, be ranked with the first performers in this country.'[34] The following year (1791), she was praised as having 'played most exquisitely on the Violin' at Salomon's Hanover Square concert.[35] 'Exquisite' was a frequent description of Gautherot's playing. Although many reviews were too short to adequately assess the level of critical engagement, the heavily feminised critical language is a recurrent feature. A 1790 review of a *Messiah* performance on February 19, at which Gautherot played a Viotti concerto, gave positive praise to all the performers,

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[30] [Unsigned] 'News' London Evening Post. no.10453. February 28 1789.

[31] [Unsigned] 'News' *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London). February 20 1790, 282.

[32] [Unsigned] 'Arts & Entertainment' *World* (London) February 18 1790, 978.

[33] Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser, Feb. 24, 1789, quoted in Timmermann, 'Gautherot, Louise'.

[34] [Unsigned] 'Arts and Entertainment' *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London). no.4974. March 7, 1789.

[35] [Unsigned] 'News' *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London) 612. March 12 1791.

but Gautherot was particularly singled out, 'Madame Gautherot's Concerto on the violin was a very singular instance of superior delicacy and execution on an instrument, which few females have been able to play upon with distinguishing ability.'[36] It is significant that the 'delicacy' of Gautherot's playing was particularly praised. Another review, of Haydn's concert on 11th March 1791, praised her 'taste and neatness of execution in a very pleasing Violin Concerto, the composition of Viotti.[37]

Another review from February 1789 indicates Gautherot's success with both audiences and the press:

> Covent Garden Oratorio drew such a crowded theatre, that in less than half an hour after the doors were opened, the house was full in every part....Madame Gautherot's concerto on the violin was equal to any performance on the same instrument by the first musical master of the present times. The audience were enraptured with it, and the applause lasted for a long continuance.[38]

Similarly, a review from an oratorio performance which took place on 27th February 1789 remarks, 'Madame Gautherot played on the violin a Concerto of Viotti's, a Parisian Composer, with amazing taste and brilliancy. There are few professional men who can surpass her exertion. Her *Adagio* was a good performance.'[39] It seems that Gautherot was accepted as a soloist on her own terms, with typically 'female' traits like delicacy and 'exquisite' playing praised alongside her technical facility. More significantly, these two reviews explicitly place her as an equal to her male contemporaries. Interestingly, when compared to some of her male counterparts, reviews of Gautherot's playing included relatively more discussion of her playing. Reviews during the period of Cramer – who often appeared in the same concerts as Gautherot – contained notably less discussion of the playing:

> '…last, though not least in our admiration, a very elegant *Concerto* on the violin by Mr. Cramer.'[40]

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[36] [Unsigned] 'News' *Diary or Woodfall's Register* (London) 282. February 20 1790.

[37] [Unsigned] 'News' *London Chronicle* (London) no.5390. March 10-12th 1791.

[38] [Unsigned] 'News' *Whitehall Evening Post* (London). no.6513. February 28 1789. This review also appeared in *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (London). no.6181. February 28 1789 and *Star* (London). no.259. February 8 1789.

[39] [Unsigned] 'News' London Evening Post. no.10453. February 28 1789.

[40] [Unsigned] 'Anacreontic Society.' *Times*, 18 Jan. 1788, p. 3.

> 'A solo on the violin by Cramer was given, as might be expected from such as master, in the most capital and exquisite manner.'[41]

> [Review of an 'Ancient concert'] 'The first Concerto of Geminiani, Op.3d, gave fine opportunity for the talents of Cramer, whose violin was never more successfully exercised.'[42]

The reasons for this disparity are not entirely clear; while this could be due to an increased interest in Gautherot due to her sex, it is also possible that this was more a reflection of her novelty value as a performer new to London.

Gautherot also seems to have been well regarded by her peers, although it is not clear to what extent she might have been regarded by them as an equal; the *Morning Post* wrote in 1789 that 'Madame GAUTHEROT on the Violin, excited the curiosity and applause of all the professional men, among whom was Cramer.'[43] The reference to 'curiosity' suggests that some of her male contemporaries may have regarded her more as a novelty than as a serious musician. The context of London concert programming at this point may also have had some bearing on this idea of Gautherot as a curiosity or novelty. Simon McVeigh's work on novelty and familiarity in late-eighteenth century concert programming describes a relevant division in marketing and programming:

> Enticements pulled in two contradictory directions, stressing novelty on the one hand and familiarity on the other….Undoubtedly novelty was the more persuasive of the two….London appreciated both familiar performers and recurrent repertoire. Yet the attraction of novelty was as potent here as in any other area of London's entertainment.[44]

According to McVeigh's reading of programming conventions, Gautherot, as a foreigner *and* a female violinist would have closely aligned with this 'novelty' model, and her programming choices, introducing Viotti to London audiences would have further reinforced this categorisation.

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[41] [Unsigned] 'News,' *Morning Chronicle*, November 21, 1788.

[42] [Unsigned] 'News,' *Diary or Woodfall's Register*, May 3, 1792.

[43] [Unsigned] 'News' *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (London). no.4985. March 20 1789. Accessed May 31 2017 via 17th-18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers.

[44] Simon McVeigh, Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 78.

Not all of Gautherot's reviews were positive, and she drew some criticism for a lack of power in the bow; a February 1789 review remarked:

> Mad. Gautherot, the New Violin, was much applauded. She bows but feebly, but she has a rapid and brilliant left hand, that overcame many difficulties. Her Adagio was the least good. The Allegro Rondeau, rather a pretty thought, was the best.[45]

Alongside the discussion of physical strength, it is significant that Gautherot was perceived as being most successful in the 'pretty' movement, and there was no discussion of aspects such as interpretation, although her technical skill was praised. The diarist Susan[na] Burney mentioned Gautherot particularly unfavourably, which is especially interesting as she had also heard Sirmen perform:

> Madame Gautherot played a Violin Duet with Cramer – I was glad to see she was supposed to do herself credit in it – but for my own part it seemed a great disadvantage to her –she executed all the passages – but it was with evident Labour – nothing was distinct – nothing clear – the powerful tone, the *freedom – decision*, & most of all the perfect *facility* with which Cramer repeated every passage after her, disgraced all that she attempted, & betrayed the weakness & inferiority, which tho' certainly it was no wonder to perceive would have appeared far less glaring had she not subjected herself to so close & immediate a comparison. She has laboured infinitely there can be no doubt to attain such rapid execution, & so much precision – but in the most valuable points is I believe *very* inferiour [sic] to Sirmen indeed. It is true I heard Sirmen before I had heard any great Violin Players–& now perhaps she would not seem so charming to me as she did in those *early* days – Yet still I am convinced she was far superiour [sic] in style & in feeling to Madame Gautherot....In the 2nd Act Madame Gautherot executed a Trio of Viotti's – the same in which the preceeding [sic] evening I had heard Scheener – Poor woman – it would have been unfortunate for her if many in

[45] [Unsigned] 'Professional Concert' *World* (London) no.661. February 10 1789. Accessed April 13 2017 via Gale.

> the room had had the same luck – however as it is Music rather brilliant than touching, she executed it exceedingly well.[46]

The oboist W. T. Parke also wrote in his memoirs of Gautherot's first performance that 'At the end of the second part Madame Gautherot, from Paris, performed, for the first time in England, a concerto on the violin with great ability. The ear, however, was more gratified than the eye by this lady's masculine effort.'[47] It seems that although Gautherot fared well in the short reviews of the press, private accounts differed, and audience members may have been more critical of her playing than is immediately evident in the press.

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen was born in Venice as Maddalena Lombardini in either 1735 or 1745. Very little is known about her childhood, other than that she was not from a family of musicians. Lombardini Sirmen had her tuition at the *Ospedale die Mendicanti* from the age of seven; the *Ospedali* chapels were famous for their music and the best teachers in Venice were employed by them.[48] Although originally the *Ospedali* had functioned as orphanages, with the girls training as musicians to bring in revenue, by the early eighteenth century they regularly recruited students from the general population who showed musical promise as boarders, and this was the case for Lombardini Sirmen.

Lombardini Sirmen's Mendicanti training provided a thorough musical education, including lessons in theory and harmony, vocal training, violin and harpsichord tuition; the Mendicanti's students also gave performances to important Venetian visitors. Lombardini Sirmen therefore grew up in an environment in which women made music to a high standard as a matter of course, and in a city which had already produced two high profile women composers, Barbara Strozzi and Marietta Giusta.[49] However, Lombardini Sirmen seems to have outgrown the high level of teaching

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[46] Susan[na] Burney, ed. Philip Olleson, *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Late Eighteenth-century England.*(Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), from journal letter, entries for 25 April-1 May 1789. [1st May 1789] However, it is difficult to know how much credibility to assign to Burney. As the daughter of a musical family (her father was the musician and historian Charles Burney (1726-1814)), it is likely that she had some musical knowledge, but as a diarist, her account may be overly subjective.

[47] William Thomas Parke, *Musical Memoirs : Comprising an Account of the General State of Music in England, from the First Commemoration of Handel, in 1784, to the Year 1830. Interspersed with Numerous Anecdotes, Musical, Histrionic, &c.* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), vol. 1, 120.

[48] Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 4.

[49] Ibid., 1.

offered at the Mendicanti relatively quickly, and she approached Tartini for advice and lessons.[50] A letter written by Tartini to Lombardini Sirmen is one of the main reasons she is remembered today, as the letter took the form of a treatise on violin playing in Tartini's own voice. Arnold notes that the purpose of the letter is unknown, but suggests that as the letter was dated three months before Lombardini Sirmen asked the Mendicanti for permission to study with Tartini, 'perhaps there were lengthy discussions which have not been recorded about the advisability of the lessons, before the Governors were approached to give their permission.'[51]

At the beginning of June 1760, Lombardini Sirmen was approved to travel to Padua with a chaperone in order to study with Tartini, seemingly because the Mendicanti recognised the prestige it would bring the institution.[52] Arnold comments that 'her playing must have improved considerably, since the following year there was no opposition from the Governors when she asked permission to go to Padua again for more lessons with Tartini.'[53] There are no records of her visiting Padua in 1762 and 1763, but these might have been lost. Lombardini Sirmen did return in 1764, although the Mendicanti Governors refused to fund her trip; Berdes and Arnold suggest that a wealthy patron might have paid her expenses instead.[54]

It appears that Lombardini Sirmen's life at the Mendicanti was not a happy one, and Tartini, who seems to have taken on a somewhat paternal role to her, wrote to his ex-student Johann Naumann, who was employed at the Dresden court, hatching a plan to marry Lombardini Sirmen to a musician there. The letter provides a useful insight into her life at the Mendicanti, and demonstrates Tartini's determination to help her:

> The poor child, so much slandered and envied in the Holy House, as you have yourself seen with your own eyes, has no other wish but to escape out of it, in order not to die of madness, or something worse; and indeed she will certainly seize the first opportunity which offers for doing so. It is true, most true, that both she and I are agreed in desiring to secure her engagement by H.R.H., even at an allowance which should be less by one half than she could obtain at any other Court; but, where it is a question of saving life, one clings even to thorns, as the proverb goes. I confess to you moreover that, if the clemency of our Sovereign Mistress consents to the plan

[50] Ibid., 29-30.

[51] Ibid., 30.

[52] Ibid., 31.

[53] Ibid., 32.

[54] Ibid., 29-30.

> proposed, so that this pupil of mine may have the good luck to be received into Her service, this will be the greatest consolation of my old age. [55]

This particular scheme of Tartini's did not come to fruition, but at some point between 1760 and 1768, Maddalena married the violinist and composer Ludovico Sirmen, who was the *Maestro di capella* of Santa Maria Maggiore in Bergamo. However, the main purpose of the marriage seems to have been to release her from the Mendicanti; as Marion Scott says, 'the world, not the cloister, was her choice.'[56] Alongside her activities as a violinist, Lombardini Sirmen also composed numerous works for the violin, many of which she performed herself, sometimes alongside her husband.

Performances prior to arrival in England

Lombardini Sirmen started her career outside the Mendicanti with a successful tour of Italy, and apparently enjoyed a rivalry with the Italian violinist-composer Pietro Nardini (1722-1793).[57] In 1768 Maddalena commenced a European tour with her husband and a companion, Don Giuseppe Terzi. They performed in Turin, which was on the main route between Paris and Italy; Arnold explains that many of the Italian performers who played at the *Concerts Spirituel* often played at Turin on their way to Paris. Arnold quotes a letter written by Quirino Gasparino to his friend Padre Martini at Bologna on 22nd June 1768, which gives some indication of Maddalena's reception in Turin:

> The distinguished Signora Maddalena Lombardini who studied the violin with Signor Giuseppe Tartini, has been here for a few days. She is from the Conservatorio of the Mendicanti in Venice and is married to a certain Lodovico Sirmen who is first violinist at the Capella at Bergamo. She won the admiration of all Turin with her violin playing. She left today with her husband for France. She was very pleased to have received gifts and other valuables to the value of 400 zecchini. Last Saturday I wrote to old Tartini at Padua telling him of this; it will satisfy him and make him happy, especially since the violinist performs his sonatas with such perfection that she proves herself to be his true and worthy descendant.[58]

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[55] Julian Marshall, 'Tartini and Maddalena Syrmen,' *The Queen, the Lady's Newspaper,* March 26, 1892, 491.

[56] Scott, 'Maddalena Lombardini', 153.

[57] Ibid., 153.

[58] Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen*, 50.

Although positive in tone, there is no meaningful critical engagement with Lombardini Sirmen's playing, instead she is cast in the roles of wife and (by implication) daughter. From Turin, the Sirmens continued to Paris, to play in the *Concerts Spirituel* at the Tuileries *Salle des Suisses* in 1768.

Arnold draws attention to the fact that the *Concerts Spirituel* series had a history of presenting women violinists, including Elizabeth de Haulteterre in 1737, and Mme. Tasca in 1750, and remarks:

> Probably a good deal of excitement was generated by the thought of a beautiful young woman playing the violin in a public concert. The publicity-conscious management of the *Concert Spirituel* made Maddalena promise not to perform in public in Paris before her first concert of them on 15 August 1768.[59]

At this performance, she and Ludovico played a concerto for two violins by Ludovico. The careful management of Lombardini Sirmen's appearance suggests a high level of public interest in her, but also indicates that her status as a female performer, rather than her playing, may have been the main attraction. Lombardini Sirmen appears to have taken a short break from November 1768, reappearing in reviews in March 1769, when she played 'a new violin concerto' at several concerts in Paris. Berdes and Arnold note that the *Concerts Spirituel* performances only amounted to seven concerts in as many months, and suggest that the Sirmens probably taught and gave private concerts to supplement their income.[60]

<u>London performances</u>

Lombardini Sirmen arrived in London in early 1771, without her husband, who had moved to Ravenna. Her first appearance was at the King's Theatre, Haymarket on 10th January 1771, between the movements of J.C. Bach's Oratorio *Gioas*. Like Gautherot, her reputation on the continent clearly preceded her. The organisers placed a proud notice in the *Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser* stating:

> The Managers of the Operas at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, beg leave to inform the nobility and Gentry, &c. that they have engaged Signora Lombardini Sirmen,

[59] Ibid., 51.

[60] Ibid., 54.

> the celebrated performer on the Violin, who is to perform Thursday next, at the said Theatre, being the first time of her performing in public, since her arrival in England.[61]

This was followed by several similar notices in the same paper which also described Sirmen as 'the celebrated Performer on the Violin.'[62] The first concert was heavily advertised, as were a second and third concert at the same venue on the 17th and 24th January 1771, with Lombardini Sirmen similarly described in the advertisements: the managers who had engaged her to play in their concert series were clearly eager to promote their acquisition. In a similar vein to the King's Theatre, the managers of the Theatre Royal also placed a notice in the papers to this effect, stating 'Signora Lombardini Sirmen, the celebrated female Performer on the Violin, is engaged at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, for the ensuing Oratorio Season.'[63] In her first month of being in London, Lombardini Sirmen already had the security of being booked for an entire season concurrently at both the Theatre Royal and the King's Theatre. Arnold suggests that 'The logical explanation is that she was brought to England partly through an invitation from Johann Christian Bach and partly through the network of ex-pupils of Tartini.'[64]

Lombardini Sirmen's London career did not have an auspicious start; her first benefit concert was due to take place on 1st February 1771, but was postponed twice, for reasons unknown. During 1771, she played at a number of benefit concerts, as well as between the acts of various oratorios. Her own benefit concert finally took place on 15th April 1771, at Almacks, under the direction of J. C. Bach and C. F. Abel. Perplexingly – especially considering the heavy advertisement of her skills as a violinist – Lombardini Sirmen played a concerto on the harpsichord rather than the violin. Her motivations for this choice are unclear; perhaps she was concerned about her novelty value and felt the need to demonstrate a broader variety of skills, or she may have been uneasy about English attitudes to female violinists. Arnold's write up of Baldauf-Berdes' research offers little exploration of this, merely remarking that it was 'intriguing'.[65] The roster of players at the oboist Fisher's benefit on the 29th April was virtually identical to Lombardini Sirmen's, suggesting that within her circle, a mutually beneficial setup with benefit performances existed. Arnold concludes that 'All in all, 1771 had been a most exciting year for Maddalena. She

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[61] [Unsigned] 'News' *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London) no.13058. January 5 1771.

[62] [Classified Ads] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London) no.13059. January 7 1771.

[63] [Unsigned] 'News' *Public Advertiser* (London) no.11290. January 26 1771.

[64] Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 63.

[65] Ibid., 70. Arnold does hint that Lombardini Sirmen's decision to play the harpsichord might have been linked to publicity for the harpsichord adaptation of her violin concerto in 1773 by Tommaso Giordana. This seems improbable, due to the two-year gap between these events.

had had a very successful London season and her *Six Trios* had been published by Hummel in Amsterdam, Welcker in London, and Sieber in Paris.'[66] Meanwhile, Ludovico Sirmen was making a name for himself in Ravenna, directing orchestras and playing concerti.

Lombardini Sirmen played another London season in 1772, but it is not clear how she spent her time between the 1771 and 1772 seasons. Arnold speculates that 'we assume she went back to Italy to see her husband and daughter.'[67] She seems to have been doing well, as she moved to the fashionable area near the Haymarket, on Suffolk Street. However, she played in fewer concerts than the previous year, and was generally advertised as "Signora Sirmen" rather than "the celebrated".'[68] Her benefit concert was held at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, rather than Almacks, the venue of her previous benefit, which Arnold speculates may have been due to a disagreement with J. C. Bach.[69] Lombardini Sirmen continued to play at oratorio concerts, often playing her new concerto, as well as taking part in benefit concerts. She also played at three *Concerto Spirituale* events at Covent Garden, the last of which (10th April) was advertised as her final performance in England.

Lombardini Sirmen returned to London in 1773 as a singer. Arnold suggests several motivations for the return:

> Was it that singers then as now were more highly paid than instrumentalists?....Or was she afraid her star billing was now being taken over by others?...Or was it that Signora Guglielmi–Lelia Achiapati–and her husband had left England and there was the need for another soprano? Maddalena had been trained as a singer in the Mendicanti, so there was no reason why she should not sing professionally.[70]

Although Arnold's commentary is based in speculation rather than evidence, it seems significant that Lombardini Sirmen abandoned her career as a violinist and reappeared in the less controversial guise of singer. She performed in several operas, including Sacchini's *Il Cid,* and Gluck's *Orfeo.* Her last documented appearance in London was in June 1773, and she faded from view from this point onwards. However, her violin concertos were published and heavily advertised in France between 1775 and 1777, and her *Violin Sonata in A major* was published in Vienna some time after 1776. Meanwhile, Lodovico Sirmen seems to have stayed in Ravenna until the late 1790s.

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[66] Ibid., 74.

[67] Ibid., 77.

[68] Ibid., 77.

[69] Ibid., 78.

[70] Ibid., 83.

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen appeared as a singer in Dresden in 1779, with the next documented appearance being an invitation to Russia in 1783 as a *Prima Donna* in the Imperial Theatre of Petersburg. She returned to Paris in 1785, and played at the *Concerts Spirituels,* but the reaction was not favourable, implying that the playing and repertoire was not sufficiently showy:

> She preserves those characteristics of the Tartini School – charming tonal quality, and a playing style that is full of grace and emotional intensity, especially since she is a woman–that are, perhaps, somewhat neglected nowadays. Her playing style, however, is just the same as it was when she appeared here 14 years ago and, is therefore, extremely out of date. For some time now, violinists have placed more importance on speed of playing instead of tonal quality and on feats of skill instead of imitating the singing voice. Unfortunately Mme Sirmen may have been able then to astonish her listener's ears, but she can do so no longer....Mme Sirmen would do well to change her playing style so that it conforms to what is fashionable today. If she does, then we do not doubt that she will again receive the same enthusiastic applause that she did heretofore.[71]

Following this performance, she played concerti by Viotti at two further concerts, and then appears to have ceased performing. Lombardini Sirmen rejoined her husband in Ravenna in October 1786. She died on the 15th May 1818 and left two wills (June 1798 and September 1817) and a codicil (April 1806). Arnold notes that 'In her first will she sounds extremely prosperous and is generous in leaving gifts of money to relatives and friends.'[72] However, in the codicil of 1806 she wrote '. . . in view of my changed circumstances, and since I am no longer in a position to offer benefits, and since I have no more than a few items of silver which I have retained from the past to serve me in case of need . . .', indicating a change in her fortunes.[73] Arnold attributes this to the end of the Venetian republic and the resultant collapse of Venetian currency.[74]

Like Gautherot, Lombardini Sirmen's career seemed to quickly wane, although not for reasons obviously connected to injury or the raising of children. However, there was clearly conflict in the Sirmen marriage: Lodovico Sirmen had a relationship with an Italian countess and pursued his own career as a musical director and violinist in Ravenna while Maddalena was in

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[71] *Mercure de France*, 7 May 1785. Quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 99.

[72] Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 103.

[73] Ibid., 105.

[74] Ibid., 105.

London. It may well be that both Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen both faced difficulties in maintaining the interest of London audiences after their first season, and struggled to maintain performing careers. While it is possible that there may have been more sustained interest in Gautherot and Sirmen in continental Europe, it is difficult to gain an accurate sense of this without consulting nineteenth-century continental sources in their original language, which is both beyond the scope of this study and its author's linguistic abilities. In this sense, a multi-lingual study comparing the continental and English careers and reception of these two players would provide a valuable addition to the existing scholarship.

Repertoire

Even at her debut performance in England, Lombardini Sirmen's repertoire was advertised only as 'a Concerto on the Violin.'[75] This was repeated throughout 1771, for which none of the available newspaper advertisements or reviews list any specific repertoire. However, in 1772, Maddalena was playing her own concertos alongside generic 'concerto violin' performances, and in 1772 she played a concerto by Cirri. As outlined earlier in the chapter, the lack of information about repertoire was relatively typical for this period in London, and should not be read as a consequence of Lombardini Sirmen's gender. Concerts were advertised only with vague details of repertoire, and programmes offered little further information.

Lombardini Sirmen therefore fitted the model of the composer virtuoso, performing her own compositions in London. In contrast, although Gautherot played virtuoso works, she seems to have carved out a career for herself as a specialist in interpreting the compositions of Viotti. Lombardini Sirmen's set of 6 concerti op.3 (c.1760) are likely to have been those which formed part of her concert programmes in London.[76] Although some of the writing is technically relatively straightforward, this is punctuated by florid and heavily ornamented passages, often of scalic and arpeggiated material, and some technically challenging double stops, necessitating several changes in position.

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[75] [Classified Ads] *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London) no.13061. January 9 1771.

[76] Jane L. Berdes suggests in her editorial notes to her edition of the work that the set of six concerti (three of which are included this edition) were 'composed no later than 1772 (the date of their first publication…), the concertos appear to date from the 1760s (the decade of her study with Tartini) and may have been written shortly before Maddalena began her first concert tour in 1768.' Jane L. Berdes, editorial notes to *Three violin concertos,* ed. Jane L. Berdes (Madison: A-R Editions, 1991).

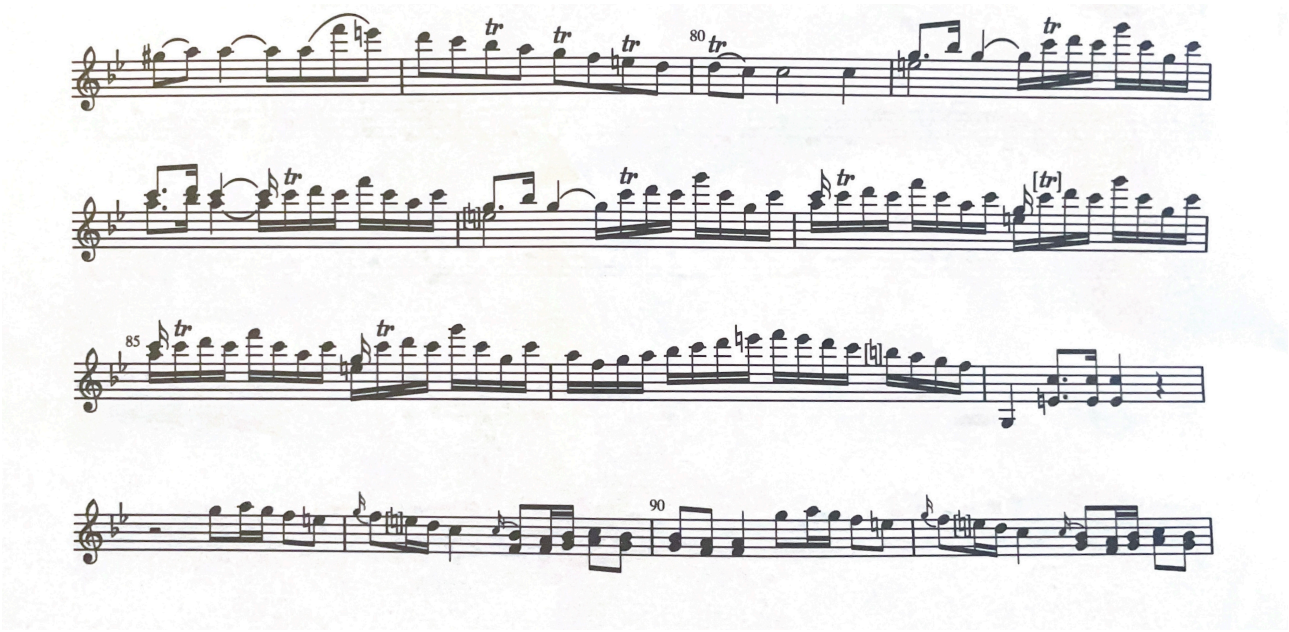

Fig. 3.3: Lombardini Sirmen, Violin Concerto Op.3, No. V, first movement

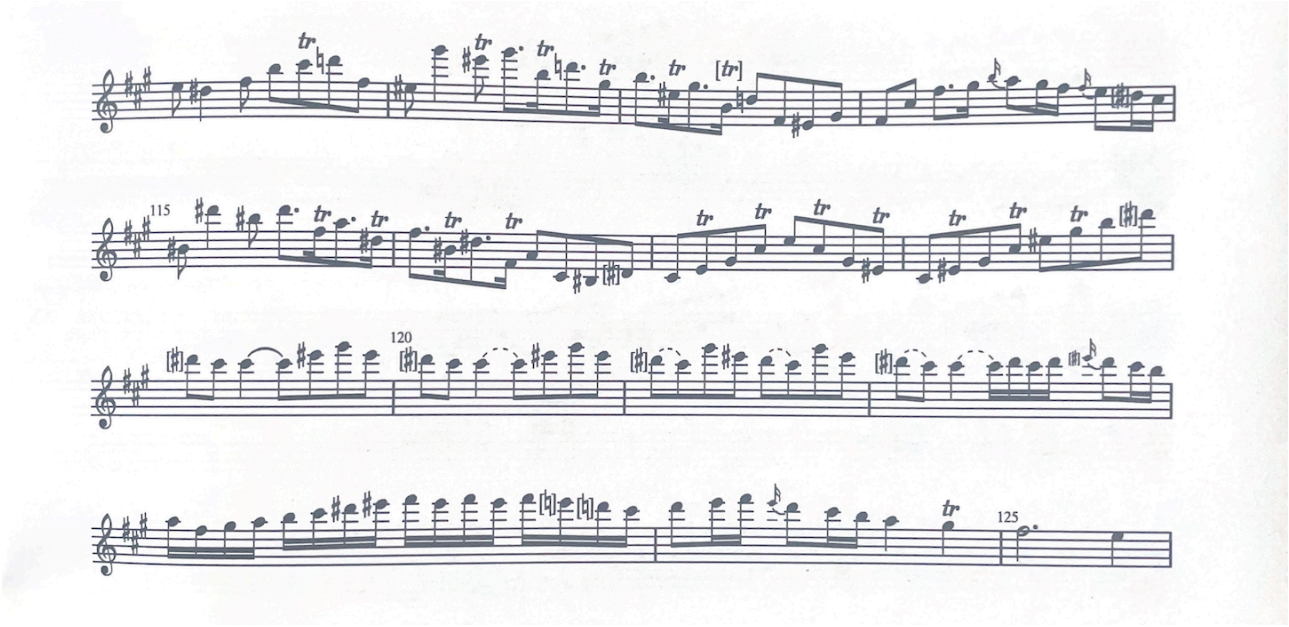

Fig. 3.4: Lombardini Sirmen, Violin Concerto Op.3, No. III, first movement

Critical reception

Lombardini Sirmen's continental reviews are more plentiful than those of Gautherot. However, where Gautherot's reviewed were reprinted in London, there is no surviving evidence that Sirmen's were. Arnold and Berdes give several examples from the *Concerts Spirituel* in August 1768, where Maddalena and her husband played a double concerto which they had jointly composed. An anonymously written review in Louis Petit de Bachaumont's *Mémoires secrets, pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France* reads :

> The audience was attracted by the spectacle of a woman playing the violin. Mme Sireman, a young and pretty Venetian, performed a double concerto with her husband which they had composed....She was applauded loudly. One found truth, purity, and gentleness in her playing. Especially in the Adagio, she played with a sensitivity which is characteristic of her sex. Certainly she has taken the violin so far in the direction of perfection that one is hard put to name any of the great masters who could play better or even as well as she does.[77]

Like the 'astonished' letter writer's response to Gautherot, the 'spectacle' described by the review of Lombardini Sirmen's playing strongly suggests the performance being engaged with for its novelty value. The emphasis on traits of 'truth, purity, and gentleness', along with the 'sensitivity' of her playing suggest that she was perceived as succeeding within the aspects of playing ascribed as female, but there is no engagement of any depth, especially in relation to technique. Similar examples appeared in other continental reviews, 'Her violin is the Lyre of Orpheus in her graceful hands. Her beautifully expressive playing, her style and ease of playing put her in the first rank of virtuosi.'[78] The 'lyre' motif appeared in multiple reviews of Lombardini Sirmen's playing:

> Mme Siremen is a pupil of the famous Tartini; she has absorbed completely the playing style of this skilled violin master, especially in the handling of complex embellishments

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[77] Louis Petit de Bachaumont's *Mémoires secrets, pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France*. [18. (London, 1777-89), XIX, 266., quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, 52.

[78] *L'Avant Coureur,* 22 August 1768, p.540, quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 52.

for which he is particularly known. It is like a muse touching the Lyre of Apollo and her charming appearance adds still more to the excellence of her musical gifts.[79]

This interpretation of her performance is particularly interesting, as Lombardini Sirmen is cast in the role of muse, with Tartini given large credit for her style. Meanwhile, the praise of her handling of complex ornamentation is somewhat undermined by the subsequent comments on her appearance. Almost identical themes appeared again in *Mercure de France* in March 1769, 'Mme Lombardini Sirmen, student of the celebrated Tartini played some violin concerts and was greatly admired for the power of her bow and the delicacy of her playing; she is a muse holding Apollo's lyre.'[80]

Although the Continental reception of both Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen was largely positive, reviews were rather superficial in nature, mainly engaging with aspects of the performances typically perceived as feminine, such as aesthetics, and highlighting qualities of the playing such as delicacy and purity. The language around Lombardini Sirmen's playing is particularly interesting, as critics appear to have struggled to engage with her as an artist, and instead recast her in the role of muse. The continental reviews for both women echo the main themes found in the London reviews, and the reprinting of Gautherot's continental reviews indicates sustained interest in her playing activities even when she was not in London.

There is scant documentation of critical reactions to Lombardini Sirmen's performances in London. This discrepancy between the enthusiastic advertising of her performances and apparent lack of critical response could be a product of critical conventions at the time; however, the level of engagement with Gautherot's playing less than twenty years later suggests that this is unlikely to be the case. It is possible that instead, this reflected a perception of Lombardini Sirmen as a musical novelty rather than a serious artist to critically engage with. One rare review praised her artistic restraint, 'Her tone, and stile of playing is very pleasing, and her execution truly chaste, without any of those unnecessary and extravagant liberties, which the generality of Solo players on the Violin frequently give into.'[81] The reference to chastity is striking; it is hard to imagine the same praise applied to a male contemporary. Meanwhile, Lombardini Sirmen's gender was discussed in

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[79] 'Spectacles' *Mercure de France,* September 1768, p.117. quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 52.

[80] *Mercure de France* (April 1769), 143., quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 54.

[81] Potter, *The Public Ledger,* 1772, 215-16., quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes. *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 80.

deprecating terms in some quarters, Mrs Delaney, a friend of Handel's wrote in a letter to a friend that she had been invited to hear 'the *fiddling woman'* in January 1771.[82]

Legacies

Despite their relatively brief careers on the English concert scene, both Gautherot and Sirmen made an impact in the consciousness of the London musical public, to the extent that in the following century, accounts of their careers frequently appeared in articles discussing female violin playing. By 1839, Louise Gautherot was held up as a successful example of a woman violinist, 'Madame Louise Gautherot, a Frenchwoman, was greatly distinguished on this instrument. In 1789 and 1790, she performed concerto at the London Oratorios, making great impression by the fine ability she manifested'.[83] In 1872, H.R. Haweis wrote that 'In more modern times ladies have excelled on the violin...Louise Gautherot, a Frenchwoman, was also distinguished for her concertos played at the London Oratorio Concerts, 1789-90.[84] The same article also mentioned Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen:

> Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen, who united to high accomplishment as a singer such an eminence in violin playing as enabled her in some degree to rival Nardini, had an almost European reputation towards the end of the last century. She received her first musical instructions at the Conservatorio of the Mendicanti at Venice, and then took lessons on the violin from Tartini. About the year 1780 she visited France and England, giving the amateurs in both countries the singular opportunity of hearing a *Sirmen* on the fiddle! She also composed a considerable quantity of violin music, a great part of which was published at Amsterdam.[85]

The relationship between Tartini and Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen was the subject of a lengthy article published in *The Queen* in March 1892. This discussed a recently found letter from Tartini to J.G. Naumann, an ex-pupil who was employed at the Dresden court. It is clear from the tone of the article that in 1892 Sirmen was still well known in England, 'Of her career it is unnecessary here to

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[82] Lady Llanover, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence* (London, 1861-62), I, 322., quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen,* 65.

[83] [Unsigned] 'Female performers on the violin,' *The Musical World* 12/72 (1839), 34-37.

[84] H. R. Haweis, 'Old Violins', *The Contemporary Review, 1866-1900,* 21 (December 1872). 85-110.

[85] [Unsigned] 'Female performers on the violin,' 35.

speak at greater length. She became famous, and the rival in Italy of Nardini, then the most prominent of public performers on the violin in that country.'[86]

Sirmen was remembered in several publications. She gained a paragraph in Ernst Ludwig Gerber's *Historisch-Biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler* (Leipzig, 1790-92), and is mentioned in Abraham Rees; *The Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature* (London, 1802-20). Her entry in this volume was written by Burney, and is similar to his piece in *History*:

> Sirmen, Mad. a celebrated performer on the violin, who had her musical education in a conservatorio in Venice. Her maiden name was Maddalena Lombardini. She was a favourite *élève* of Tartini, and it was for her that he drew up his little tract on the use of the bow on the violin, in the form of a letter "Arte dell'Arco". After quitting the conservatorio she married a German of the name of Sirman, and came to England in 1773 ,when her performance of Tartini's compositions on the violin was justly and universally admired. But in the operas of "Sofonisba" by Vento, and the "Cid" by Sacchini, she unadvisedly undertook the second woman's part on the stage, as a singer; but having been first woman so long upon the violin, she degraded herself by assuming a character, in which, though not deficient in voice or taste, she had no claim to superiority.[87]

She was also mentioned in Alexandre E. Choron and F.J.M. Fayolle's *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens, artistes et amateurs* (Paris, 1810-11), John Sainsbury's 1824 *Dictionary of Musicians from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time Comprising the Most Important Biographical Contents of the Works of Gerber, Choron and Fayolle, Count Orloff, Dr Burney, Sir John Hawkins &c&c (London)* and in 1929 in Walter Cobbett's Cyclopaedia of Chamber Music. It is worth noting though that most of these recycled the material from previous publications.

Conclusions

Although superficially, it appears that both Lombardini Sirmen and Gautherot forged successful careers as solo violinists in the late eighteenth century, aspects of both their lives illustrate some of the challenges faced by women violinists. Reviews of performances by both women reveal gendered ideas about the nature of successful or appropriate violin playing, with aesthetic aspects

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[86] Marshall,'Tartini and Maddalena Syrmen', 491.

[87] Quoted in Arnold and Baldauf-Berdes, *Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen.*

such as grace and delicacy featuring frequently. A more explicit discussion of this came in W. T. Parke's remarks in his memoirs about Gautherot:

> It is said by fabulous writers that Minerva happening to look into the stream whilst playing her favourite instrument, the flute, perceiving the distortion of countenance it occasioned, was so much disgusted that she cast it away, and dashed it to pieces. Although I would not recommend to any lady playing on a valuable Cremona fiddle to follow the example of the goddess, yet it strikes me that if she is desirous of enrapturing her audience, she should display her talent in a situation where there is only just light enough to make "darkness visible."[88]

While Parke's reaction is an extreme example, this type of reaction to women playing the violin may well have underpinned some critical responses. More subtle factors were also at play; the difficulties both players appear to have faced in maintaining a career suggests that at this point, a career as a professional female violinist was not viable in England. Lombardini Sirmen's reinvention of herself as a singer is particularly interesting; Ian Woodfield suggests that 'Sirmen's attempt to establish herself as an opera singer is perhaps a sign that she was aware that her status as the latest celebrity violinist was on the wane'. However, even well-regarded male violinists like Cramer and Salomon struggled to sustain playing careers in London, and Woodfield adds 'Sirmen had the added disadvantage that tastes in violin playing were changing...The more lyrical style of violin playing had gone out of fashion in favour of an emphasis on brilliant (and to some critics unthinking) virtuosity.'[89] In 1892, Julian Marshall remarked that following her praise by Tartini and success in Europe, 'It is all the more strange that she should have afterwards thrown aside the violin to sing secondary parts in opera. The cause lay probably in the higher pay of singers.'[90] However, even Lombardini Sirmen's opera career appears to have been quite short-lived.

It is likely that the issue of family also caused tension; Gautherot paused her career around the time of her marriage, and seems to have stopped performing entirely around the time of the birth of her children. Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen did not stop performing upon her marriage or when she had her daughter, and this seems to have caused problems within the marriage. Suzanne Forsberg remarks, 'It seems clear from the many laudatory concert reviews Berdes provides that

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[88] Parke, *Musical Memoirs,* vol. I, 129-130.

[89] Ian Woodfield, 'Elsie Arnold and Jane Baldauf-Berdes Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen: Eighteenth-Century Composer, Violinist, and Businesswoman. Lanham, MD, and London: Scarecrow, 2002 Pp. Xvi 170, ISBN: 0 8108 4107 X.' *Eighteenth Century Music* 1, no. 1 (2004), 91-2.

[90] Marshall, 'Tartini and Maddalena Syrmen', 491.

Lombardini Sirmen overshadowed her husband, and this may have contributed to his decision to return to Ravenna in 1771 to pursue his career separately and to raise their infant daughter.'[91] In this context, it is significant that Lombardini Sirmen came from a culture which valued female music making; Marion Scott remarked that the curriculum of the Mendicanti 'would have horrified the Victorians', and this perhaps partly explains her tenacity in pursuing a solo career.[92] The all-round education of the Mendicanti, including harmony and composition studies also enabled her to conform to the composer-virtuoso model prevalent among performers of the time. This level of education was, of course, not available to most women, and would have constituted an additional barrier to successful performance.

Despite the gendered aspects of their reception and practice challenges they faced, there is a danger in attributing the tapering off of Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen's careers solely to prejudice against women violinists, and should be considered in the broader context of professional musical life around the turn of the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries. Simon McVeigh argues that 'Even the most celebrated foreigner faced the danger of over-familiarity as his career progressed.'[93]

While Gautherot seems to have been more a target for more heavily gendered criticisms of her violin playing, the comparative lack of English reviews for Lombardini Sirmen indicates critical issues around the performance of both players. It is possible that Tartini's endorsement of Lombardini Sirmen, in conjunction with her prestigious Mendicanti education, to some extent protected her from these criticisms in her continental reviews. Tartini was clearly a pro-active mentor to his students, facilitating opportunities and creating networks between his students, but most women players would not have had access to this type of support network.

Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen's careers in the late eighteenth century therefore provide a valuable insight into attitudes towards women violinists and the practical challenges they faced. Both women struggled to sustain performing careers in England, and critical reactions show a limited level of engagement with their performances as serious artists. Nevertheless, Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen are significant for their pursuit of performance careers in the face of these challenges. The positive critical responses to their playing, even if somewhat superficial, indicate that audiences and critics alike were interested and open to accepting women as performers on the violin.

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[91] Forsberg, 'Review - Three Violin Concertos', 1174.

[92] Scott, 'Maddalena Lombardini: Madame Syrmen', 150.

[93] Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 82.

Preface to Chapter 4:

The first half of the nineteenth century

Socio-musical changes in the female realm

Nancy Reich highlights the first half of the nineteenth century as being a period of immense change for musically inclined women, and highlights the importance of their role in musical life:

> The political, social and economic events that followed in the tumultuous aftermath of the French Revolution offered women many opportunities in musical life but also presented them with additional problems….Women in increasing numbers took part in amateur musical activities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Their numbers gave an impetus to all the businesses that served music.[1]

Reich partly attributes the rise in female music-making to bourgeoise families discovering the value of musical education for their daughters in advancing their social status.[2] Marcia J. Citron's work on the period concurs, but emphasises the catalyst for this being more tied up with socio-political factors:

> The advent of the nineteenth century witnessed a marked increase in the number of female musicians who utilized their creative talents, with a parallel rise in recognition from contemporary musicians, journalists, and audiences. The greater participation of women in a field traditionally associated exclusively with men is largely attributable to certain political and social currents wafting across Europe in the early-to mid-eighteenth century.[3]

Citron does not specify what these 'political and social currents' were, but presumably she, like Reich, was referring to the aftermath of the French Revolution. This increase in female amateur music making is significant, as it normalised women performing. As attitudes started to relax, the scope and opportunities for women musicians increased, leading towards a more conducive

[1] Nancy B. Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1890', in *Women & Music: A History,* ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 147.

[2] Ibid., 148.

[3] Martha J. Citron, 'Women and the Lied, 1775-1850,' in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950,* ed. Jane s and Judith Tick (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986), 224.

environment for them to explore instrument options other than the piano and voice. However, the gendered division of instruments was still at this point very much present in some quarters. In 1847, *The Fine Arts Journal* published an article on 'The Pianoforte Mania', which, although arguing the case for increased female performance on the piano and harp, decried the adoption of these instruments by male players, writing: 'Have the conscience then, gentleman pianists, to become good composers and, like your brothers of the harp, invent as many beautiful themes as you are able, but leave to women the care of their exertion.'[4]

Meanwhile, the rise in female amateurs during the first half of the nineteenth century was reflected in an explosion of literature specifically aimed at the female market, as Nancy Reich explains: 'books, almanacs and dictionaries of music as well as music magazines designed especially for the needs and interests of "the fair sex" became popular in every European country.'[5] This suggests a growing recognition and acceptance of women's activities within the musical realm.

Despite this, the emphasis on the home as the proper sphere of woman and the subsequent 'cult of domesticity' that developed during the first half of the nineteenth century caused some conflict with women's performance, both in terms of women performing publicly or choosing to play an instrument for recreation. Mary Burgan's work on music within the home explains:

> According to a number of the Victorian treatises that advocated the necessity of thorough training in domesticity, then, conventional feminine musicianship was a trivial pursuit, an unworthy distraction from the vocation of managing a home.[6]

These shifting ideas about the role of women within the home is likely to have influenced ideas about women performing publicly. Reich describes the Romantic movement in the first half of the nineteenth century as having 'dominated all the arts in the nineteenth century, and argues that the Romantic expectations for women placed them in a supportive rather than creative capacity, 'Woman was idealized; her function was to serve as a muse for the creator, to inspire and nurture the man; her feminine side was deemed a weakness should it color her music.'[7] This had direct implications for women musicians; while this model might allow them success as performers (i.e.

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[4] [Unsigned] 'The Pianoforte Mania,' *The Fine arts journal* 1/12 (23 Jan 1847), 188.

[5] Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', 147.

[6] Mary Burgan, 'Heroines at the Piano: Women and Music in Nineteenth-Century Fiction.' *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1986), 61-62.

[7] Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', 148.

communicators or conduits for the ideas of male composers), it allowed them limited scope in more intellectual aspects such as interpretation or the playing of their own compositions. This had further implications for women violinists; as outlined in chapter one, while the piano might fit this model in its role as accompanying instrument, the playing of the violin would present more of a direct challenge to the convention, due to its stronger association with the soloistic virtuoso role. Indeed, Reich highlights the 'societal displeasure' women who transgressed this model faced.[8]

John Rink's discussion of the importance of female pianists in changing approaches to canon around the 1840s further illustrates Reich's point:

> Female pianists also made a place for themselves, especially during a 'reign of the women' (*Le Ménestrel*) in mid-1840s Paris…Women played an important role in canon formation with their interpretations of music by other composers (usually men); often 'unintrusive' in nature, such interpretations 'ensured that the works themselves remained the focus of attention' rather than the playing in its own right.[9]

This growth in female pianism was significant for two reasons. Firstly, it normalised women soloists pursuing performing careers, easing the path for women playing other instruments such as the violin; secondly, it provided a performance model outside that of the virtuoso-composer, one that was more aligned with notions of appropriate female behaviour outlined by Reich, through its emphasis on the repertoire rather than the performer. Simultaneously, Jim Samson describes a 'growing "composer-centredness" from around 1800' that was 'manifest in the programming of the subscription concert series that sprang up in Europe's cultural capitals', the Philharmonic concerts in London being an example of these.[10] This may have further facilitated the acceptability of women pursuing professional performance careers; if programming focused on the composer rather than performer, this created an environment where women could succeed as interpreters, rather than positioning themselves in the realm of virtuoso performer. Therefore, although the role of the female musician expanded during the period, the situation for women performers was complex, and still limited by ideas about the value of performance over domesticity, and the extent of women's role as interpreter versus originator.

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[8] Ibid., 149.

[9] John Rink, 'The Profession of Music', in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 67-8.

[10] Jim Samson, 'The Great Composer,' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 263.

Rita Steblin's work on gender and instruments highlights the activities of child prodigies in broadening the scope of instruments for women, 'One of the avenues leading to the dissolution of the old stereotyping of musical instruments was the advent of the touring child prodigy.' Steblin explains that the success of the Mozart family inspired a lucrative growth in the number of children being trained for the concert hall at a young age, and remarks 'Since novelty was an important part of these circus-like affairs, the audience was often treated to the spectacle of a young girl playing the violin or flute.' Steblin notes that as the public became more acclimatised to seeing girls playing these instruments, 'the old stereotyping began to disappear–at least for the violin, violoncello, and lighter wind instruments.'[11]

Musical Education

A significant development in the nineteenth century European musical world was the establishment of music schools dedicated to training professional musicians, which Nancy Reich argues 'created new environments for women performers.'[12] Reich cites the early examples of the Paris Conservatoire (founded 1795) and the Royal Academy of Music (founded 1823), both of which admitted women students from their opening, alongside a long list of institutions across Europe which opened during the nineteenth century and 'admitted female students subject to special conditions'.[13] However, in England, the scope of women's studies were initially limited; it was not until the later nineteenth century that women pursued studies of instruments other than the piano, voice or harp. Reich notes that despite extremely limited opportunities for the formal study of orchestral instruments by women, 'there were a number of instrumentalists, usually the daughters of professional musicians, who studied privately and had professional careers in the early decades of the nineteenth century.'[14]

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[11] Rita Steblin, 'The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments in the Western Tradition,' *Canadian University Music Review* 16/1 (1995), 143.

[12] Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', 150.

[13] Ibid., 150.

[14] Ibid., 170.

Chapter 4:

The English reception and legacy of the Milanollo sisters, 1837-1845

Introduction

The Milanollo sisters as violin revolutionaries

Modern writings on the 'prejudice' against women violinists typically credit Wilma Norman-Neruda as inspiring the first generation of English women violinists. However, much of the nineteenth-century literature on the subject attributes the change to both Norman-Neruda and the Milanollo sisters, Teresa and Maria. In 1886, George Upton wrote that 'Camilla Urso, the sisters Milanollo, and Madame Neruda have shown what woman can accomplish with the violin.'[1] Likewise, Gertrude Ogden remarked in 1889 that:

> The musical world about forty years ago began to experience a change of sentiment toward violin playing by women. ... It seems to me that the Milanollos on the Continent, Camilla Urso in America, Lady Hallé, Dr. Phipson's book and Miss Werner in England, are each in turn entitled to share the credit of making violin playing by women "respectable." Terese and Marie Milanollo, two charming Italian girls, born 1827 and 1832 respectively, appearing as talented prodigies, the elder as early as 1836, soon in their concert touring on the Continent aroused great interest and sympathy. ... At the time of her marriage and retirement in 1857, at the zenith of her power, she had created such intense interest among the members of her sex that from now on the violin came to be regarded as an instrument most proper and most desirable for them to play.[2]

In March 1900, the *Musical Opinion and music trade review* asserted that 'no woman adopted the calling of the "travelling *virtuoso*" of the violin before the two Italian sisters, Theresa and Maria Milanollo,–the "little Milanollos" whose presence in Frankfort, where they created a regular *furore*...'[3] Finally, *The Monthly Musical Record* reported in 1887 that:

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[1] Upton, George P. *Woman in Music*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg and company. 1886. 203.

[2] Ogden, Gertrude Paulette. 'Growth of violin playing by women' *The Violin Times* 6/66 (April 1899). 106-108.

[3] C.L.G. 'Musical Amazons' *Musical Opinion and music trade review* 23/270 (March 1900) 404.

> The first impulse thereto was probably owing to the sisters Milanollo, who, contemporaneously with "little Wilhelmine Néruda," created a sensation in the musical world; and, indeed, no one who has heard those fascinating artists will deny that the violin is of all others the instrument pre-eminently adapted both to the manipulation and emotional display of female performers.[4]

All this illustrates that the Milanollo sisters had a definite impact on shifting attitudes towards women playing the violin. However, very little English-language sources are available on the Milanollo sisters, and this is the first attempt to collate information about their career and reception, and examine the extent to which they may have been influential in sparking the overturning of the 'prejudice'.

Biographies

The events that led to Teresa Milanollo starting a career as a violinist were well documented in the English musical press, and rather romanticised in some versions. She first heard a violin at the age of four, in church, and pestered her father for lessons. She learned quickly and was taken to Turin at the age of six to learn with Gebbaro and Mora, then made her *début* in Paris in 1836.[5] She studied with Tolbeque and Lafont in Paris and then travelled with the latter. Teresa appears to have taken tuition wherever she could, Albert Lavignac's entry for her in 1901's *Music and Musicians* offers a few more details:

> She travelled repeatedly in Italy, France, England, Holland, Belgium, Prussia, Austria, and Switzerland, with ever increasing success. She had the good taste, even after her talent was unquestionably exceptional, to seek lessons on the violin, from distinguished masters, wherever in her journeyings she chanced to meet them; thus she was successively the pupil of Lafont, of Habeneck, of de Bériot,–to mention only the most famous.[6]

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[4] [Unsigned] 'Viscountess Folkestone's Concert' *The Monthly musical record* 17/201 (September 1887), 212.

[5] Bekker, L. J. de. *Stokes encyclopedia of music and musicians : covering the entire period of musical history from the earliest times to the season of 1908-09*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes. 1908. 396.

[6] Lavignac, Albert. *Music and musicians*. eds Henry Edward Krehbiel and William Marchant. New York: H. Hold and company, 1901. Page 449.

Once her own career was established, Teresa taught her younger sister Maria to play the violin, and the pair toured Europe together. Maria died at the age of fifteen, and Teresa ceased performing for some time after this. In 1857, Teresa married Théodore Parmentier, an army general and amateur musician. The Milanollos' father appears to have acted as their concert manager:

> The success of the sisters was so great in 1844 that they gave forty concerts in one city, organized by their father, who kept a quantity of bouquets and wreaths of artificial flowers, which were thrown by his orders on the stage at his daughters' feet. Excellent manager that he was, he would afterwards carefully count these tributes of admiration, and terrible was his anxiety if, by any chance, one of them was missing![7]

Teresa Milanollo's solo visit to England (1837-1838)

Overview of Teresa Milanollo's first visit to England

Teresa Milanollo commenced her first English visit with a series of appearances at evening concerts in London in the latter half of June and July 1837. These soirées were hosted by eminent musical figures at private residences and were comprised of individual performances by solo instrumentalists and singers, alongside some chamber music. They typically received short, perfunctory mentions in the London musical press, with only brief mentions of each artist. An article on 'Mr Neate's Soirees' provides a good picture of these evening concerts:

> The performers are few in number, and occupy only a platform in the centre of a room instead of an orchestra at the end of it. The selection consisted solely of chamber music, both vocal and instrumental, fitted for the enjoyment of a small rather than a large audience.–for such a one, in fact, as the well-known taste and discrimination of Mr. Neate was likely to congregate.[8]

Towards the end of 1837, Teresa Milanollo toured the west of England and south Wales with the harpist Nicolas Charles Bochsa, and other artists including Curioni, Carara and Miss Nunn. The tour lasted several months, starting in Hereford in October, and moving south to Truro and Exeter in November and December of 1837. The first substantial reviews of Milanollo's performances started to appear during this period.

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[7] Strakosch, Maurice. 'Souvenirs of an Impresario' *The Magazine of Music* 5/11 (November 1888) 259. The city this took place in is not detailed in the source, but based on dates, it is likely to be continental rather than English.

[8] [Unsigned] 'Mr Neate's Soirees' *The Spectator* (24 June 1837). 15.

Milanollo seems to have taken a short break after the Bochsa tour; the next advertised concerts took place between April and June 1838. Rather than appearing at private residences as with her earlier London visit, most of her performances during this period seem to have been at assembly rooms. This choice of *society* venue, combined with the increase in press attention during the Bochsa tour, indicates that her popularity was strong and had likely increased since her first season in London.

Two questions need to be considered when considering the reception of Teresa Milanollo, firstly, the extent was she reviewed as a novelty rather than serious performer, and secondly, whether she was critiqued within the realm of 'child performer' or 'female performer'.

Teresa Milanollo as novelty performer

Milanollo's initial London performances in June 1837 were positively received, although most reviews were brief, and characterised by an absence of critical engagement. Her reviews gradually grew longer and more thorough after the first performances, but the overall impression given was that Milanollo was regarded primarily as a visually appealing child novelty. The *Musical World* provides two typical examples, referring to Milanollo as 'the interesting little child . . . .a little creature of extraordinary promise, with an unusual precision and delicacy of finger, and energy of expression, in one twice her age.'[9] A few days later, the publication described a concert where, 'the audience, throughout the performance, were betwixt laughter and admiration, to see so small a creature at work.'[10] This was continued throughout the Bochsa tour and the return to London in 1838, with one review describing Bochsa as being 'supported by the novelty of his little infant violinist.' [11] Another example from April 1838, discussing an appearance with the Distin and Rainer families in London, placed particular emphasis on her size:

> The little Milanollo is a prodigious favourite, and excites quite a *furore*. She has all MORI'S vigour *en petit detail* with her tiny bow-arm, and goes boldly to work in the staccato and arpeggio passages, ever and anon indulging in a glittering pizzicato.[12]

Although engaging with the technical aspects of Milanollo's playing, the sustained references to her miniature size suggests her to be more an unusual spectacle than a serious violinist. This theme is

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[9] [Unsigned] 'Concerts' *The Musical World* 6/67 (23 June 1837). 27.

[10] [Unsigned] 'Concerts' *The Musical World* 6/68 (30 June 1837). 40-41.

[11] [Unsigned] 'Mr Bochsa's Concerts' *The Western Times* (Exeter) no.521 (9 December 1837). 3.

[12] [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.21004 (17 April 1838). n.p.

found throughout many of Milanollo's reviews; audiences marvel at her playing, her size is emphasised–at least two publications made use the word 'Liliputian'[13]–and the lack of real critical musical engagement point towards her being received as a novelty, rather than a 'serious' musician. Additionally, newspaper reports on the first London concerts were careful to emphasise the *fashionable* audiences, again suggesting that artistic merit was perhaps less the point of the soirées than aesthetic spectacle. This was also the case on Milanollo's return to London in 1838, with *The Morning Post* reporting on a concert as 'fully and fashionably attended'.[14]

Much of the advertising material used to promote Milanollo's concerts traded on her novelty. On the Bochsa tour, she was marketed as a prodigy, 'Aged Eight Years, who, last season in London, created such an unparalleled sensation in the musical world, and whose classical and astonishing performances on the Violin were received with the utmost enthusiasm.'[15] However, this did not always work to Milanollo's advantage; portions of the press were dismissive of child performers. The main objection appeared to be lack of true musicality; *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* remarked that 'Unlike the generality of little prodigies, this child plays with taste and expression'.[16] Many of these articles display the same pattern, discussing strong pre-concert scepticism, followed by rapturous praise of Milanollo's playing once she had been heard. A review in the *Western Times* of an Exeter concert on the Bochsa tour in December 1837 provides a typical example; the full review forms one of the lengthiest discussions in English musical literature of Milanollo's playing from this period.

> People went expecting to find that which can be occasionally be met with anywhere–a clever child. . .We confess we attended the present concerts, with the impression that some such a prodigy would be the object presented. . .the gentlemen in the orchestra were particularly watchful, believing as some of them have said, that the prodigy would prove a mere humbug.
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> . . .

[13] For example 'This Liliputian violinist' [Unsigned] 'Metropolitan Concerts' *The Musical World* 9/24 (14 June 1838). 116-117 and [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.21004 (17 April 1838). n.p.

[14] [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.21015 (30 April 1838). 6.

[15] [Unsigned] 'Advertisements and Notices' *Hereford Journal* no.3511 (25 October 1837). 1.

[16] [Unsigned] 'News' *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, etc* no.2396 (2 December 1837). 3.

> Her style was perfect; to the most brilliant tone she added the most exquisite expression, giving chords that responded to every feeling of the human breast, awaking joyous gaiety, and exciting feelings of the most passionate tenderness.[17]

Although the writer's scepticism appears to be mainly directed at Milanollo's age, heavily gendered language appears in the critical engagement towards the end of the review – the 'tenderness', 'exquisite expression' and 'exciting of feelings' are all difficult to imagine reading in a review of a male player. A slightly later review of a concert by Milanollo and Ellen Day in June 1838 provides another example of the objection to prodigies:

> We have too generally found "the little prodigy" thrust forward to display his or her industry in some composition far beyond the fair expression and command of the youthful hand. . . all this manifestation of precocity is (like the wondrous performances of the learned pig, or the wise tricks of the dog and the monkey), but too frequently the result of a cruel application, an intense toil.[18]

The reviewer goes on to describe Milanollo and Day's performance as 'savour[ing] more of genius then labour. . . . [Milanollo] played the well-known aria, in E major, of Mayseder, with a finish and delicacy which completely carried away the enthusiasm of her auditors.'[19] Milanollo gains a positive review, but again, her playing is praised for typically 'feminine' attributes rather than technical skill. Her success mainly appears dependent on the *spectacle* rather than technical facility. Milanollo clearly succeeded in the role of prodigious performer, despite initial critical scepticism. However, this was often at the expense of a full discussion of repertoire and the performance, with much of the reviews being given over to discussions on the faults of prodigious performers. To take a more cynical stance, it is also possible that Milanollo's youth and occupation of a realm outside 'female performer' are emphasised in order to give the publications freedom to praise her as 'child performer' rather than 'woman performer'.

Repertoire

Repertoire details in reviews of Teresa Milanollo's playing were frequently vague or absent. However, this was not entirely unusual for reviews of the period, and it is therefore difficult to ascertain whether the lack of detail was symptomatic of contemporary critical conventions, or

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[17] [Unsigned] 'Mr Bochsa's Concerts' *The Western Times* (Exeter) 521 (9 December 1837). 3.

[18] [Unsigned] 'Metropolitan Concerts' *The Musical World* 9/24 (14 June 1838). 116.

[19] Ibid., 116-117.

whether this might further support the argument that Milanollo was not received as a 'serious' artist. A typical example is found in a review of a concert in April 1838, when *The Musical World* reported that Milanollo played a 'Fantasia' on the violin, and the concert with Augustus Moeser at the end of June 1837 further exemplifies the vague descriptions of Milanollo's repertoire. The advertised programme included 'a Concerto for two violins', but no more detail was given.[20] However, the full review in *The World of Fashion*–discussed earlier–reveals a few more details about the concert, 'the young MOESER performed an *Adagio and Polonaise,* by MAYSEDER. . . and his coadjutor played an air and variations.'[21] The title and composer of Moeser's programme is given, whereas the composer's of Milanollo's is unlisted, and the title vague. The lack of programme details in reviews may therefore suggest that some publications were less interested in the substance of Milanollo's performances than the more superficial elements.

The few examples of specific repertoire given in reviews indicate that Milanollo had a preference for technically challenging, virtuosic repertoire. During the first month in London, where she played at small evening concerts, her performance piece of choice was an air varié by De Bériot. Presumably Milanollo played one of numbers 1-7, which were published around 1830. Although it is impossible to tell which of these Milanollo might have played, all seven are characterised by showy, virtuosic writing, and De Bériot makes extensive use of rapid semi- or demisemiquavers runs, along with technically challenging consecutive double and triple stops. Milanollo also played '*Paganini's* favourite Variations' on the Bochsa tour in December 1837.[22] Both these repertoire choices indicate a player preferring to show off technical skill than pander to any idea of conventional, delicate, 'feminine' pieces.

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[20] [Unsigned] 'Multiple Advertisement and Notices Items' *The Morning Post* (London) no.20744 (16 June 1837). 1.

[21] [Unsigned] 'Concerts, musical soirees of the nobility &c. &c. &c.' *The World of Fashion: A Monthly Magazine of the Court of London Fashions and Literature, Music, Fine Arts, the Opera and Theatres* 161 (1 August 1837) 173.

[22] [Unsigned] 'Advertisement and Notices' *Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette, etc* no.2396 (2 December 1837). 1.

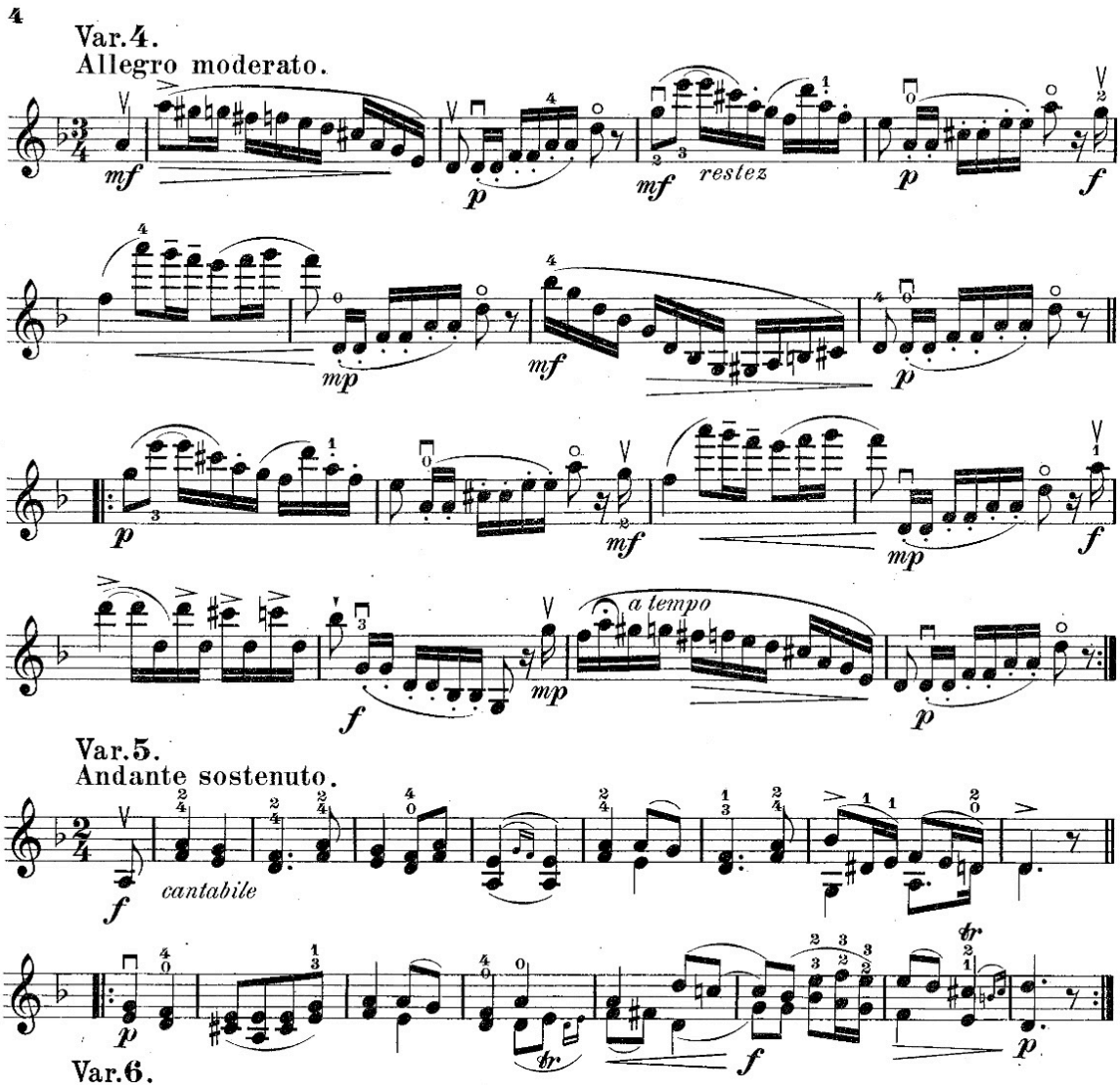

Fig. 4.1: De Bériot, 1st Air Varié, Variations 4 & 5

Alongside these two pieces, on the Bochsa Tour, Milanollo played 'A new Duet for Harp and Violin…called Dialogo Brilliante' with Bochsa, which may well have been written by him, and 'two brilliant Solos', one of which may have been the Paganini mentioned earlier.[23] When performing with the pianist Ellen Day in June 1838, Milanollo played 'BENEDICT and DE BERIOT'S duo for piano and violin' and a 'Mayseder aria in E'.[24] Although it is now difficult to find copies of the Mayseder piece, Mayseder himself was a virtuoso performer, who wrote pieces designed to show off technical skill, and it seems likely that the Air in E played by Milanollo would have continued in the pattern of virtuosic pieces she selected for concerts.

Milanollo clearly selected technically skilled and challenging repertoire, indicating that she wished to be taken seriously, rather than playing lighter, easier pieces which might be dismissed as dilettantish. Milanollo seems to have been a genuinely talented player, and nothing in contemporary reviews indicates that this repertoire was beyond her. However, the selection of virtuosic repertoire may also have been designed to play into her novelty appeal; a small child playing impressively difficult pieces would draw in audiences.

Gendered language

Although there are few (if any) overtly negative reviews of Teresa Milanollo's 1837-8 visit to England, the language in a few articles points towards some problematic attitudes towards her as an artist. *The Morning Post* displayed scepticism about Milanollo's playing, remarking on 'a surprising proof of musical talent by her performance on the violin.'[25] Milanollo's joint concert with the similarly aged violinist Augustus Moeser on 30th June 1837 also reveals a discrepancy in the language used to discuss male and female players. *The World of Fashion* described Moeser's playing as having 'brilliant tone and good execution', as opposed to the mere 'spirit and taste' of Milanollo's.[26] *The Morning Post*, although describing both as 'eminent professors of the violin', focused more on the technical aspects of Moeser's playing than Milanollo's:

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[23] [Unsigned] 'Advertisements and Notices' *Hereford Journal* no.3511 (25 October 1837). 1.

[24] [Unsigned] 'Drury-Lane Theatre' *The Morning Post* (London) no.21050 (21 June 1838). n.p. and [Unsigned] 'Metropolitan Concerts' *The Musical World* 9/24 (14 June 1838). 116-117.

[25] [Unsigned] 'The Earl and Countess Cadogan's Party' *The Morning Post* (London) no.20756 (30 June 1837). n.p.

[26] [Unsigned] 'Concerts, musical soirees of the nobility &c. &c. &c.' *The World of Fashion: A Monthly Magazine of the Court of London Fashions and Literature, Music, Fine Arts, the Opera and Theatres* 161 (1 August 1837) 173.

> The former exhibits great force in his manner of playing; his bowing is steady, and he executes the most complex passages with the utmost precision. . . *la petite*. . .performs on an under-sized violin with much delicacy and feeling; her execution is also very brilliant, in the De Beriot style, and she is altogether a most interesting little person.[27]

Moeser's playing is again described in virtuosic and technically skilled terms, while the language used to discuss Milanollo's is overwhelmingly feminine. Her technical skill only merits a token remark at the end of the review, and even this is related back to a male player (De Bériot).

Positive critical engagement

Although many reviews appeared to regard Teresa Milanollo chiefly as an attractive novelty, her performances did also attract some positive critical engagement. In 1837, during the Bochsa tour, a reviewer from the *Cornwall Royal Gazette* went 'to hear Mr Bochsa' at Truro, but was clearly impressed by Milanollo's playing:

> '…The inimitable, the captivating MILANOLLO. What then must have been our astonishment, when we heard a child of eight years of age, developed the highest powers of this charming instrument, and evince such a mastery of its difficulties as we could alone have ventured to look for in the first *artistes* of the age! . . . such is her transcendant talent; to say "it *gratified*" is far too weak an expression,–it *entruptured*, it *astounded*.'[28]

In contrast to the reviews mentioned earlier, there is far less emphasis on Milanollo's age and size, and very little overtly gendered language. Instead, the focus is on her exceptional talent. Another review from the Bochsa tour, relating to a concert given in Exeter in December 1837 describes Milanollo as 'one of the greatest prodigies of precocious talent that was ever witnessed. . . whose performances on the violin, are so masterly, highly finished, and effective, as to strike every body that witnessed them, with the most profound astonishment.'[29] Again, the review is overwhelmingly positive, and there is little gendered language evident, excepting the use of 'Masterly'. A review of a concert with Day in June 1838 comments, 'Though mere children they exhibited a judgement and

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[27] [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.20758 (3 July 1837). n.p.

[28] [Unsigned] 'Multiple News Items' *The Cornwall Royal Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal* no.1793 (24 November 1837). n.p.

[29] [Unsigned] 'Mr Bochsa's Concerts' *The Western Times* (Exeter) 521 (9 December 1837). 3.

skill on their respective instruments, which would have reflected credit on years more mature and practice more extensive.'[30] In 1838, *The Musical World* remarked that 'every hearing of her extraordinary talents increases the feeling for her genius, and demonstrates the admirable manner in which she has been instructed.'[31]

Conclusions

Teresa Milanollo's 1837-1838 initial concerts were well received. However, the language of the reviews predominantly indicate her playing as being successful within the stereotypically 'female' aspects of playing or considers her within the role of child performer. In many instances, there is little engagement with her technical skill, and often very little information about her programmes; the *content* of her performances came second to the spectacle. It is also worth noting that many of these performances were held at private residences, within a semi-private 'salon' setting, and often alongside other child prodigies or families with gifted children. Milanollo's performances at these were therefore both a safe option as an introduction to the London concert scene, and were also likely to be less socially problematic than a formal concert hall setting. It appears that Teresa Milanollo's performances on the Bochsa tour were well received, but reviewers mainly considered her within the realm of child prodigies, rather than as a 'female violinist'.

Teresa & Maria Milanollo's joint visit to London (1845)

Background to the tour

After her performances in England in 1837, Teresa Milanollo returned to Italy for several years, and reportedly taught her sister Maria to play the violin.[32] The sisters then toured Europe together, 'visited nearly all the Courts of Europe, and have given an immense number of concerts.'[33] The continental concerts were clearly hugely successful. *The Era* reported that 'The two concerts of the sisters *Milanollo*, at Vienna, amounted to 20,000 florins (£2000). It is true the artists at Paris cannot boast of similar receipts.'[34]

The Milanollo sisters' first appearance together in London was a Tuesday morning concert with full orchestra at Willis's Rooms on May 20th 1845. The rest of the programme was made up of

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[30] [Unsigned] 'Foreign Dramatic Intelligence' *The Observer* (10 June 1838). 2.

[31] [Unsigned] 'Metropolitan Concerts' *The Musical World* 9/26 (27 June 1838). 148.

[32] Maria also had some lessons with Ernst. [Unsigned] 'Maria Milanollo' *The Musical World* 23/46 (11 November 1848). 721.

[33] [Unsigned] 'Mlles. Milanollo's Concert–Tuesday morn-.' *The Times* no.18930 (22 May 1845). 6.

[34] [Unsigned] 'Music and the Drama' *The Era* no.256 (20 August 1843). n.p.

a few vocalists and Ellen Day, who had also played at many of the same concerts as Teresa Milanollo during her first visit. This concert garnered immense interest from the London press, with *The Morning Press,* The *Athenaeum*, *The Morning Chronicle* and *The Times* all publishing thorough, full-length reviews. Details of the programme are given below:

Part I

Overture (*Fidelio*) — Beethoven

Air, from *Lucia di Lammermoor,* M. Perelli, (First Tenor of the Italian Opera, Amsterdam)

"Maestoso," from De Beriot's Third Concerto, Madlle. Teresa Milanollo — De Beriot

Adagio and Rondo, from Vieuxtemps' Fourth Concerto
Madlle. Maria Milanollo, (Pupil of her Sister) — Vieuxtemps

Air, from *I Puritani,* Madlle. Bertuct (First Singer of the Italian Opera, Amsterdam)
Bellini

Concertante Duet, for two violins, sur des motifs de *Lucia di Lammermoor,* Mesdlles. Maria and Teresa Milanollo — Milanollo

Solo, Piano-Forte. Miss E Day.
'L'Espagnotelle," Grand Adagio and Theme, with Burlesque Variations, composed and execcuted by The Mesdemoiselles Teresa and Maria Milanollo

Part II

Overture (*Oberon*) — Weber

Fantasie Caprice, sur des motifs du "Pirate," Madlle. Teresa Milanollo — Ernst

"Souvenir d'Amsterdam," et Variations Carnavalesques, Mdlles. Teresa and Maria Milanollo.

Duet from *I Puritani,* Madlle Bertucat and M. Perelli Bellini

"Carnaval of Venice," Concertante for two Violins,
The Mesdlles Teresa and Maria Milanollo, with
Grand Orchestral Accompaniments. Ernst

On the 9th June, the sisters gave a Monday evening concert at Hanover Square Rooms, as part of the Philharmonic Society concert series. The concert was a critical success, and received vast numbers of reviews, significantly outnumbering those relating to any of their other concerts before this point. The programme contained the Vieuxtemps concerto split between the sisters and a Concertante for two violins by Teresa.[35] On the 24th June 1845, a second morning concert was held at Willis's rooms, 'assisted by the whole of the Brussels Opera Company', and conducted by Charles Hanssens.[36] They also seem to have played a number of smaller benefit concerts during their stay.

Teresa was also invited to partake in some chamber music, playing a 'Quartet in A' at the Beethoven Quartet society, with Sivori, Hill and Rousselot.[37] This was a mark of the esteem in which she was held, 'Mr. Alsager invited to his house, in Queen's-square, the *elite* of the musical profession, native and foreign, for the practice of quartet-playing.'[38]

Age

The Milanollos were teenagers when they appeared in London in 1845, and it is worth considering how their ages would have affected their reception. Teresa was born in August 1827, so would have been only two or three months off turning 18 at the time of the 1845 visit, while Maria was born in July 1832, so would have been about to turn thirteen. However, throughout the English press, Teresa's age was consistently given as sixteen, suggesting that either she did not know her exact date of birth, or she (or more likely, her father, who was their manager), had deliberately removed a couple of years from her age. Although Maria's age occasionally varied in reviews, Teresa's was so regularly quoted as being precisely sixteen that it seems likely the press were deliberately misinformed. Examples included:

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[35] [Unsigned] 'Theatres and Music' *John Bull* no.1279 (14 June 1845). 375. The pieces performed by the orchestra and singers were also listed, but I will not repeat them here.

[36] [Unsigned] 'Multiple Advertisement and Notices Items' *The Morning Post* (London) no.23221 (18 June 1845). 1.

[37] J.W.D. 'The Beethoven Quartet Society' *The Musical World* 20/25 (19 June 1845). 289.

[38] [Unsigned] 'The Suicide of Mr. Alsager' *The Era* no.426 (22 November 1846). n.p.

> 'She is now still little more than a child, being, we are told, only sixteen.'[39]
>
> 'The Demoiselles Milanollo, two sisters of the ages (we understand) of sixteen and fourteen'.[40] - this one gets Maria's age wrong as well.
>
> 'They are Italians by birth, the eldest sixteen years of age, the youngest only twelve.'[41]
>
> 'The one is not seventeen, and the other is several years younger'.[42]

Teresa was described on the first visit as looking young for her age, and it seems likely that she used this to her advantage. This may not necessarily have been to avoid the issues of being a 'woman violinist' but may merely have been to capitalise on the more marketable idea of sibling prodigies.

Gendered discussion

From their very first concert in London, reviews of the Milanollo sisters' joint performances frequently discussed the propriety of women appearing in public as violinists. The *Athenaeum*'s lengthy report on the first London concert provides a typical example, whilst also containing one of the most detailed descriptions of the Milanollos' playing:

> The impression caused by the sight of two girls playing the violin, can but be grotesque for a passing moment (let St. Cecilia's attitude and occupation in many an old Italian picture be remembered by those whom it may concern, and it becomes poetical), –so great is the musical accomplishment of the sisters, and its soundness is warranted by its variety. ... Mdlle. Teresa has the dignity, the breadth, and the composure of a *maestro* in her performance. There is neither the impatience nor the frivolity of youth about her. She draws "the long bow' like a man, and phrases like a composer' preferring, it would seem, what is elevated and large in style:–though equal to the feats of execution

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[39] [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

[40] [Unsigned] [Untitled Article] *John Bull* no.1276 (24 May 1845). 327.

[41] [Unsigned] 'PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS' *The Examiner* (London) no.1950 (14 June 1845). n.p.

[42] [Unsigned] 'Theatres and Music' *John Bull* no.1279 (14 June 1845). 375.

> demanded by a concerto of De Beriot's and Ernst's *fantasia* on themes from 'Il Pirata.' Mdlle. Maria, the younger sister, is less sure as a player, perhaps, but has more dash; is more impulsive and freakish, but perhaps also a little more spirited. We confess to a preference for this young lady, at the expense, it may be objected of our sound judgement.[43]

The *Atheneum* openly refers to the disapproval towards female violinists, and although the only objection discussed is aesthetic, there is an implicit suggestion that female players typically did not possess the musical understanding or physical capabilities requisite to succeed as a soloist. The invocation of Saint Cecilia sets a respectable precedent for the Milanollos' playing and the writer reassures the reader that the sisters' gender does not interfere with their skill and is free from typically feminine traits of playing. Teresa is paid the ultimate compliment of playing 'like a man' but it is interesting that the reviewer prefers the younger sister's playing, considering she was the less experienced of the two, and–significantly–more a child than a woman. The 'spirited' and 'impulsive' features of her playing which gain praise are stereotypically childish.

The Morning Chronicle's reaction to the same concert also demonstrated the contemporary emphasis placed on female attributes:

> We have been too much surprized and too much delighted by these charming young women to be able to analyse distinctly the sources of the pleasure they have given us. Something, of course, must be ascribed to their personal beauty, grace, and engaging sweetness and modesty of manner; but, setting all this aside, we are convinced that their performances will lose nothing on the strictest examination. In respect to fulness and richnese [sic] of tone and brilliancy of execution, MARIA seems to be not much behind her elder sister; but in the endless shades of expression, in the vocal quality of her tone, and in her power of making her instrument discourse the most eloquent language of passion and feeling, TERESA appears to be unrivalled.[44]

The writer is careful to highlight how the sisters' performance stayed within the bounds of acceptable female behaviour, with the beautiful aesthetic and 'modest' manner emphasised.

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[43] [Unsigned] 'Concerts of the Week' *The Athenaeum* no.917 (24 May 1845). 524.

[44] [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

However, there is an implicit suggestion that the sisters' success was largely down to this pleasing aesthetic.

The next large-scale concert, on the 9th June, in the Philharmonic series, drew similar comments. The *Standard*'s review also discussed the aesthetic objection, and offers more insight into ideas about correct female behaviour:

> The violin concerto of the Milanollos was a remarkable specimen of unusual feminine accomplishment. We have been given to understand that these two young creatures are not merely executive puppets–tutored slaves, and nothing more. ... their performance of the concerto of Vieuxtemps was marked by refinement of style as well as unexceptionable execution. But while we accord to these clever girls the praises which are justly their due, we can but repeat the regret we have before expressed, that the greater portion of their short lives should have been absorbed in an unsuitable pursuit–one so destructive to the graces of womanly deportment. Such exhibitions give us little delight, for every fresh feat of dexterity that we encounter, while it surprises the ear, suggests at the same time the painful certainty that hours upon hours of the freshest youth have been sacrificed in ceaseless labour to achieve it–hours which would otherwise have been spent in cheerfulness and innocent gaiety.[45]

Although mainly presented as an objection to child prodigies, *The Standard* clearly took issue with the Milanollos perceived disrupting of their femininity by playing the violin. Their playing is reviewed as stylish, but technically unremarkable, again indicating a belief in the natural technical superiority of the male soloist. The negative reaction to the concept of female violin players reads as a warning to other young women of a certain social standing that their role is to be attractively carefree, not to undertake serious study. The reaction to this specific concert may also have been partly due to the context. The Philharmonic Society was concerned with serious, high-level performances, and playing there arguable legitimised the sisters as genuine musicians. This critical response may have been reflective of a feeling that that the Milanollos' performance was not truly in keeping with the Philharmonic's core principles.[46] Issues of 'deportment' also feature in *John Bull*'s review of the same concert:

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[45] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Concerts' *The Standard* (London) no.6511 (11 June 1845). 7.

[46] See Cyril Ehrlich, *First Philharmonic: A History of the Royal Philharmonic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). I am grateful to Christina Bashford for this suggestion.

> The two charming sisters ... are really prodigies ... yet there is nothing juvenile in their performance, save its indescribable air of freshness. They perform the most difficult pieces of the day with the utmost facility, and invest them with a charm beyond what the composers themselves can bestow. They have conquered the prejudice against female violinists, for they enchant everybody by the grace, as well as the modest simplicity of their deportment.[47]

Again, this direct discussion of the 'prejudice' points towards an aesthetic and behavioural objection, with the importance of ladylike grace, modesty and deportment stressed. Meanwhile, the suggestion that the Milanollos had 'conquered the prejudice' in England was rather a bold statement at this point, but it is perhaps significant that some critics felt this to be true of the moment in question in 1845. There was also an indication that being female might actually be a benefit, adding feminine 'charm' that the male composer cannot. This is reinforced in *The Musical World*, which remarked that 'Their youth–their sex–their pretty and interesting personal appearance induced even more to the effect than their playing of Vieuxtemps' elaborate concerto'.[48] Deportment featured again in *The English Gentleman,* '[They] created a most favourable impression, both by their performance and their interesting and ladylike deportment.'[49]

Aside from the discussion of gender, the majority of reviews from the Milanollos' 1845 appearances reflected a positive public reaction, and an enthusiastic discussion and interest in their European performances. The *Atheneum*'s report on the sisters' first London concert demonstrates the immense popular interest in this performance:

> It is long since the expectations of the artist-world have been excited to such a lively degree, as by the fame of these young lady violinists, who have carried the continental cities by storm wherever they have appeared, and been credited by testimonials from the highest quarters.'[50]

The same concert also received an extremely complimentary review in *John Bull,* which again reflected public fascination with the sisters, and a highly anticipated London debut:

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[47] [Unsigned] 'Theatres and Music' *John Bull* no.1279 (14 June 1845). 375.

[48] J.W.D. 'Sixth Philharmonic Concert' *The Musical World* 20/24 (12 June 1845). 341

[49] [Unsigned] 'Music' *The English Gentleman* 8 (14 June 1845). 123.

[50] [Unsigned] 'Concerts of the Week' *The Athenaeum* no.917 (24 May 1845). 524.

> They showed themselves to be violinists of the very highest class. The elder, indeed, Teresa, was pronounced by the unanimous voice of the assembled *dilettanti*, to have no superior, and scarcely an equal in Europe; and her sister Maria is not far behind her either in tone, execution, or expression. . . their fame has spread over Europe, and we were induced, consequently, to form high expectations, which, however, fell immeasurably short of the reality. These young artists are to give a series of concerts; and here, as everywhere else, they will doubtless create a *furore*.[51]

However, despite the positive tone of the review, no details of the programme are given, there is no indication of repertoire, limited technical engagement, and only rather shallow, superficial praise is offered. *The Morning Chronicle*'s offering was similar in tone, 'Their performances created an impression of unbounded astonishment and delight; and it was universally acknowledged that they even exceeded their reputation .... [Teresa] has not her superior (if she has her equal) in Europe.'[52] *The Examiner* referred to the sisters being 'produced, for the first time in London to a really critical audience' at the Philharmonic concert on 9th June.[53] This undermining of the previous concert on the 20th May and implication that previous audiences were present on a more superficial basis was unfortunately not expanded on further, but the following review was positive:

> Merely to say that they are good violinists would be dealing out niggardly praise; they have a right to be treated, without any relation to their youth, as superior artists, because possessing the qualities of first-rate performers–the tone and execution, the taste and expression; to which they add a firmness which, as a general rule, can only result from long experience.[54]

Although a positive response, which praises the sisters' performance irrespectively of their age, it is worth noting that, again, the feminine qualities of 'taste and expression' are particularly commended, rather than technical skill. The first half of the *Morning Chronicle* article from 1845 (latter half discussed elsewhere) gave valuable technical critique:

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[51] [Unsigned] [Untitled Article] *John Bull* no.1276 (24 May 1845). 327.

[52] [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

[53] [Unsigned] 'PHILHARMONIC CONCERTS' *The Examiner* (London) no.1950 (14 June 1845). n.p.

[54] Ibid.

> [In the adagio and theme] while they displayed amazing powers of execution, they ridiculed, with happy playfulness, the exaggerations and absurdities of the ultra-modern style of violin playing; the *mewing* effect produced by the over-use of the slide–the hop-step and jump flights from one extremity of the scale to the other–the violent transitions of expression–the mingled *pizzicato* and *ascato*–the beating the strings with the back of the bow, &c.; from all which pieces of trickery *their own* style of execution is entirely free. Two other pieces were set down for them in the programme; but an apology was made for them on the score of fatigue, and most readily accepted by the audience, for it was very evident that they had exerted themselves quite enough. [55]

Discussion of the sisters' technical skills dominates the first half of the review, demonstrating a marked change in critical response from the reviews from Teresa's first, solo, visit. The reviewer engages critically with the performance, describing the techniques used in specific detail. Despite this, the remarks at the end of the article on 'fatigue' are telling, and are indicative of underlying social concerns about the suitability of women's stamina as virtuoso soloists.

Comparisons

Many of the reviews from 1845 pitted the sisters against each other, comparing the playing styles of each girl. This is particularly significant as by this point, Teresa would presumably have resembled a young woman, whereas Maria may well have still have looked like a child player, and the reviews therefore have the potential to give insight into the differences in reception between child and adult female performers. *The Times* commentary on the first concert provides one such example:

> The eldest, Teresa, has more expression in her play–more solidity and self-command. She has much of the grandeur and energy of Vieuxtemps, while at the same time she possesses the true Italian sensibility and brilliancy of Sivori. The youngest, Maria, has qualities of the most popular kind. Her style is piquant, and we may even say coquettish; she shows great facility in the use of her bow, and her staccato is excessively brilliant ... The intonation of both is unexceptionable, however great the difficulties they execute, and the effect of the ensemble in their duets is admirable. Teresa played Beriot's concerto in a manner that showed she had studied under this master. But the public were most struck by her performance of Ernst's Fantasie-Caprice on Il Pirata. She

[55] [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

> played it even better than Ernst himself, for she equalled him in expression, while in intonation and finished execution she was superior.[56]

The difference in language used to describe each sister is especially interesting. Teresa is compared favourably to the great artists of the time, seemingly with no gender bias. On the other hand, thirteen-year-old Maria's playing is described as 'piquant' and 'coquettish', language which was difficult to imagine appearing in a review of a male contemporary. Her performance is undermined by the comments about her age and future development. However, a particularly critical *Athenaeum* review of the 9th June concert preferred Maria's playing:

> Mdlle. Teresa took the first *allegro* in too slow a time. Her passion for expression invites her to *lean* and to exaggerate; and thus the already-long *allegro* became a little wearisome ... Nevertheless, the movement was grandly played. But our sympathies ... go with Mademoiselle Maria; there being a life and a brilliancy in this young lady's playing, which amount to genius of the first order. [57]

Interestingly, as in *The Athenaeum* review of 24th May 1845 discussed earlier, Maria's playing is preferred over her more experienced sister.[58] As both reviews are unsigned, it is impossible to know whether this was just a single writer's personal preference, or indicative of a wider-scale prejudice at the magazine. Although a far less favourable review than some others, *The Athenaeum* focuses on the musical aspects of the performance, rather than the spectacle of prodigies, and engages critically with the performance. *The Musical World* also contrasted them:

> Miss Therese Milanollo is all sentiment and delicacy; and her younger sister Maria is full of passion, energy, precision, and eloquence. The two sisters cannot be jealous of each other, inasmuch as their fame lies in the meritorious manner in which they carry out their own peculiar styles.[59]

Another review from 1845 contrasts the sisters far less favourably:

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[56] [Unsigned] 'Mlles. Milanollo's Concert–Tuesday morn-.' *The Times* no. 18930 (22 May 1845). 6.

[57] [Unsigned] 'Music and the Drama' *The Athenaeum* 920 (14 June 1845). 594.

[58] [Unsigned] 'Concerts of the Week' *The Athenaeum* 917 (24 May 1845). 524.

[59] [French Flowers] 'Letter' *The Musical World* 20/27 (3 July 1845). 319.

> As the efforts of young females, we are bound to own that the performances of the sisters Milanollo fully bear out their continental reputation. ... [They] betray the want of a steady and experienced master. They attempt things which are beyond their powers of execution, and thus, though they throw dust in the eyes of the multitude, they cannot deceive the connoisseur .... [In Teresa's playing] We remarked an excess of sentimentality which amounted to maudlin. The continued *miauling*–to use an expressive word–absolutely put us beside ourselves. On the other hand, though a variation was omitted, and several of the difficulties (instance the *pizzicato* in the passage of tenths near the end) passed over, the variation in *chords* was admirably performed and proved that, with a careful instructor, Mdlle. Teresa Milanollo might become a first-rate executant. We fear, however, the mistakes of style and false expression are too rooted in the feeling of this fair violinist, ever to be thoroughly eradicated–but we would fain hope for the best. Mdlle. Maria Milanollo–the youngest, aged fourteen–has great freedom of the bow, and a more wholesome style than her sister–but her tone is not so good. In the *variations burlesque*s of the first part she played with great animation and, so to speak, humor–but in the rondo of Vieuxtemps she was manifestly out of her depth. To sum up our opinion–the sisters Milanollo are clever, spiritual, and interesting girls–but unless they, for a while, abandon public playing–throw money-getting overboard–and take to serious and assiduous study–they are not likely ever to become great artists. Their immense popularity on the continent is easily accounted for. They are two agreeable little girls–and the novelty of female violinists, added to a talent certainly of no mean order, gives them an influence which is quite beside the influence of art.[60]

The perception is that Milanollos only succeeded as *female* performers, and did not perform great art. However, the sisters were clearly technically skilled; numerous reviews listed details of the repertoire for the 1845 concerts, revealing ambitious, showy programmes. The first concert included De Bériot's Third concerto, Vieuxtemps' Adagio & Rondo, Ernst's Fantasia Cappriccio and a number of duets, including a 'Grand Duo' and Burlesque Theme & Variations by Teresa, alongside *Souvenirs d'Amsterdam* and *Le Carnaval de Venise* Concertante for two violins.[61] *The Morning Chronicle* review gave further details:

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[60] [Unsigned] 'The sisters Milanollo' *The Musical World* 20/21 (22 May 1845). 242.

[61] [Unsigned] 'Multiple Advertisement and Notices Items' *The Morning Post* (London) no.23194 (16 May 1845). 1.

> Mdlle. TERESA MILANOLLO played the *maestoso* movement from DE BERIOT'S third concerto, and a fantasia by ERNST, on subjects from the *Pirata.* MARIA played the adagio and rondo from the fourth concerto of VIEUXTEMPS *(*who, by the way, was listening to it); and the two sisters together played a concertante duet, composed by TERESA, on subjects from *Lucia di Lammermoor,* and an adagio and theme with burlesque variations. [62]

The programme at the Philharmonic Society concert on the 9th June was similar in style. The sisters divided Vieuxtemps' violin concerto between them, 'Theresa (the elder) playing the first movement, and Maria the *adagio* and *rondo*. They afterwards performed together a concertante duet, composed, we believe, by the elder sister, on airs from "Lucia di Lammermoor".[63] *The Cornwall Royal Gazette* asserted that the splitting of the Vieuxtemps concerto was dictated by personal attributes.[64] The 24th June concert at Willis's Rooms again used flashy, virtuosic repertoire:

> Teresa Milanollo played two solos, the *Pirata* of Ernst, and a fantasia by Hausmann. Maria Milanollo executed the variations of Mayseder in A. The sisters played together a *duo concertante* of Danola, and the *Carnival de Venise* of Ernst. These performances were one continued succession of triumphs, and loud and unanimous was the applause of the delighted auditory.[65]

The audience for the first appearance in London was described as containing 'many of the most distinguished members of the musical world' by the *Morning Chronicle* and this description was also repeated in the *Athenaeum*.[66] *The Morning Post* started its review of the 9th June Philharmonic concert by remarking that 'The room was well filled last night. The programme presented many

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[62] [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

[63] [Unsigned] 'Music' *The English Gentleman* 8 (14 June 1845). 123.

[64] [Unsigned] 'Multiple News Items' *The Cornwall Royal Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal* no.4158 (27 June 1845). n.p.

[65] [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.22327 (25 June 1845). 5.

[66] [Unsigned] 'Concerts of the Week' *The Athenaeum* 917 (24 May 1845). 524. [Unsigned] 'MESDEMOISELLES MILANOLLO'S CONCERT' *The Morning Chronicle* (London) no.23577 (21 May 1845). n.p.

novelties.'[67] However, the *Morning Post* article on the 24th June concert at Willis's rooms commented that 'the attendance was not so full as we could have desired'.[68] Although press and anecdotal reviews were mainly good, audience attendance may have waned after the success of the Milanollo's initial concert. Although their programme choices were clearly designed to show off technical skill and provide a spectacle, many of the pieces were similar in style, and there is repetition across the programmes, which may have dissuaded audience members from attending after the first concert.

The showiness and technical challenges of Vieuxtemps' concerti were exemplified in the Rondo of the third concerto. A variety of bowing techniques, rapid, high passagework, triple stops and harmonics are utilised to dazzling effect. Ernst's *Carnaval de Venise* was similarly flamboyant, making use of a raft of techniques including harmonics in extreme positions, left hand pizzicati (in some instances while simultaneously bowing), extreme string crossings, florid runs and double stopping.

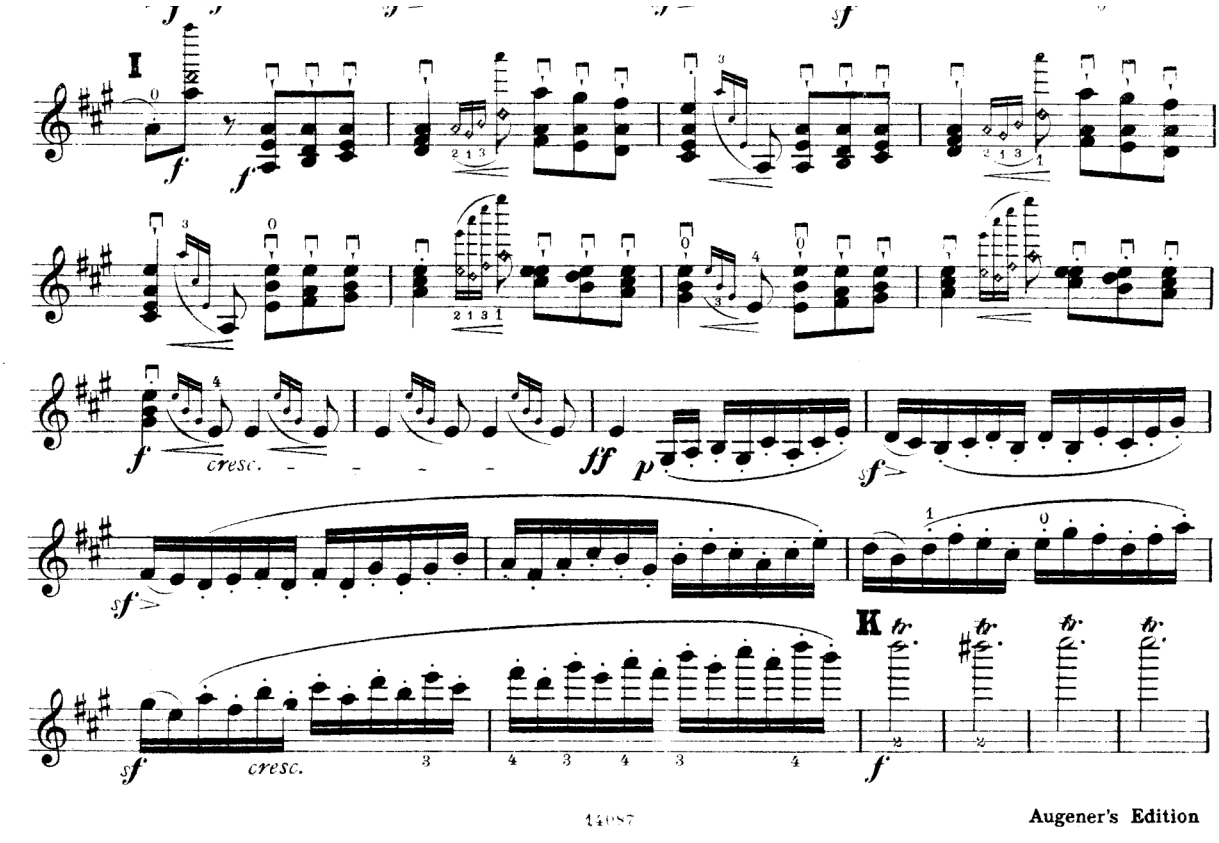

Fig. 4.2: Vieuxtemps, Violin Concerto No.3, Op.25, Rondo

[67] [Unsigned] 'SIXTH PHILHARMONIC CONCERT' *The Morning Post* (London) no.23215 (10 June 1845). 5.

[68] [Unsigned] 'Musical' *The Morning Post* (London) no.22327 (25 June 1845). 5.

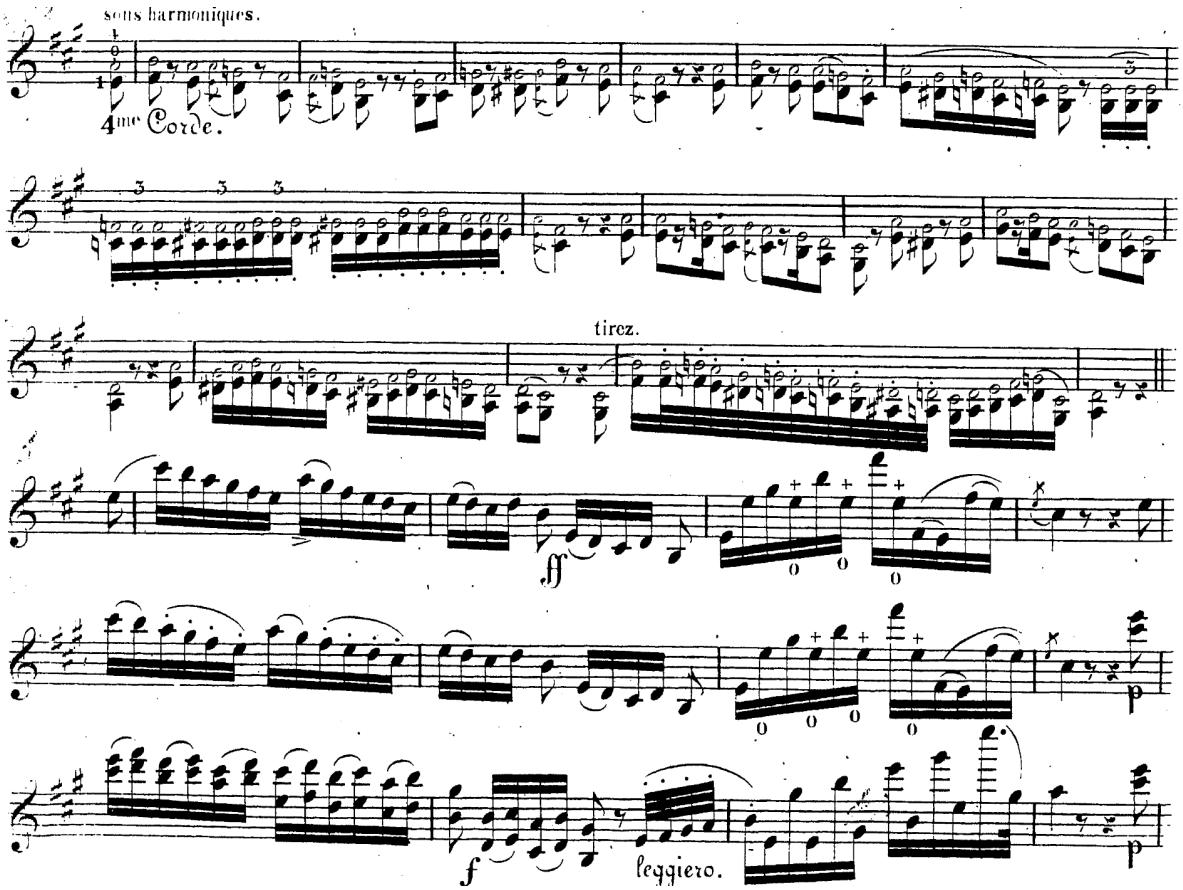

Fig. 4.3: Ernst, *Le Carnaval de Venise*, Op.18

Conclusions

The length and number of reviews was substantially higher for the Milanollos' joint visit than Teresa's earlier solo performances, indicating greater public interest, and the 1845 concerts sparked significantly more discussion of gender. The reviews follow a pattern; the Milanollos' playing is positively reviewed, the objections to women violinists are discussed, and the sisters are described as transcending these objections. The recurrent discussion of gender indicates that by 1845, the sisters were old enough that they were no longer reviewed purely as child prodigies, but as young women violinists. It is clear that there was significant public interest in the sisters, and their London appearances were highly anticipated, following reports from the continent on their concerts.

Continental concerts

The diaries of Hector Berlioz and the letters of Hans von Bülow provide a fascinating insight into how other performers who heard the Milanollo sisters in Europe regarded them. Berlioz's diary relates how he was told in Frankfurt that 'the little Milanollo sisters fill the theatre every evening; that we have never seen such a furore in the public...and that we must take some other time for great music and grand concerts.'[69] Berlioz protests that 'I must either go back again, or else pursue my journey in all recklessness at the risk of finding elsewhere some other infant prodigies to checkmate me again.'[70] Guhr, the director, responds 'What is to be done, my dear sir? the children make money...French songs make money, French *vaudevilles* draw the crowd'.[71] That Berlioz was expected to postpone his performances demonstrates the success of the Milanollos. However, the discussion indicates that the sisters were clearly regarded as a novelty act rather than serious artists.[72] Similarly, Hans von Bülow's letters reveal a harsh opinion from a male contemporary. In a letter from Vienna in 1853, he remarks that 'At this moment the Milanollo is mistress of the ground, being the fashion, which she deserves to be, for it is worth *very* little'. However, she is enough of a threat that he remarks 'Of course I must let her get out of the way first' before

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[69] Hector Berlioz, trans. & ed. William Foster Apthorp. *Hector Berlioz, selections from his letters, and aesthetic, humorous, and satirical writings / translated and preceded by a biographical sketch of the author, by William F. Apthorp (*New York: H. Holt and company, 1879), 88-89.

[70] Ibid., 89.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

undertaking his own concerts.[73] A letter a few days later to his father reveals more about Milanollo's success in Vienna:

> Here in Vienna it would be madness to risk another [concert]. The charlatan Therese Milanollo has become the fashion here - the perfectly unrecognisable disguise under which Dame Art nowadays travels about. Her old father has been on the watch lately, on account of the incompetent sale of tickets.[74]

Von Bülow's condemnation of Teresa as a 'charlatan' and the reference to 'Dame art' indicate an unwillingness from some male performers to accept the Milanollo sisters as serious artists. The Milanollos were not without rivals on the Continent. There was some competition with the brothers George and Joseph Hellmesberger, as reported in *The Musical World* of a concert in Vienna:

> Nothing more charming and graceful could be imagined than the two boys, attired in dark blue jackets with velvet collars and black trousers ... until the advent of the two youthful Italian violinists, Teresa and Maria Milanollo, who, dressed in white, as I saw them at a miscellaneous concert, carried off the palm. The two girls, Teresa more especially, proving excellent players, with the novelty of the thing [gender] super-added ... Some artistic rivalry between the two young couples was the natural consequence. ... it became known that the latter had brought to Vienna a brand new MS. Concerto written by de Beriot expressly for Teresa, with the ink scarcely dry, and jealously guarded for her sole and exclusive performance. But the young lady had reckoned without her host, or rather without the two Hellmesbergers; extraordinary mnemonic capacities. For one or two rehearsals, at which they listened "with all their ears," sufficed for Joseph to write down the violin solo part together with a pianoforte accompaniment.[75]

The British press reported intermittently on the Milanollos concerts abroad, although these typically included little critical engagement. By way of some examples, in May 1844, *The Era*

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[73] Hans von Bülow, 'The Early Correspondence of Hans von Bülow', ed. and trans. Constance Bache (New York: D. Appleton and company. 1896), 148, letter to his mother, dated 14th April 1853.

[74] Ibid., 152, letter to his father, 21st May 1852.

[75] ['Rip van Winkle *redivivus*'] 'Recollections of Musical Vienna, Forty Years Ago' *The Musical World* 65/16 (16 April 1887). 289.

reported on the sisters appearing in Berlin, after having played 'twenty-six concerts at Vienna.' The article remarks that 'It is an act of justice as well as of pleasure to record the success of Teresa and Maria, whose fine talents are set off by unaffected modesty and social qualities. They are also expected in London.'[76] In 1846, *The Athenaeum* reported that the Milanollo's had 'brilliant success' in Switzerland, and gave 'three crowded concerts in the same week' in Zurich.[77] In 1853, *The Athenaeum* wrote briefly about Teresa, 'In the Prussian metropolis the great concert-star of the past winter has been Mdlle. Teresa Milanollo.'[78]

Teresa's return to Paris in 1849 after Maria's death was reported on throughout the British press. *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* described how she was 'welcomed back with pleasure. This gifted young artiste has given several concerts, in which her great reputation as a violinist has been fully sustained.'[79] Another review remarked that 'the concerts of Teresa Milanollo, have been the late leading points of Parisian critical gossip ... [she] has now, at the age of eighteen, once more broken musical silence, and is delighting Paris with a series of beautiful concerts.'[80]

Legacy

After the death of Maria Milanollo in 1848, Teresa travelled and performed alone until she married in 1857.[81] Although she ceased playing after her marriage, Teresa does appear to have briefly rekindled her career in the late 1880s:

> Madame Parmentier, *née* Teresa Milanollo, has lately been visiting her native place, Savigliano. Most brilliant receptions were given in her honour by several societies. At a concert got up at the house of Signor Villa, a collector of instruments, she delighted the audience with some violin solos ... Her husband, General Parmentier, accompanied her on the piano.[82]

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[76] [Unsigned] 'Music and the drama' *The Era* 295 (19 May 1844). n.p.

[77] [Unsigned] 'Music and the drama' *The Athenaeum* 981 (15 August 1846). 845.

[78] [Unsigned] [Untitled Article] *The Athenaeum* 1328 (9 April 1853). 454.

[79] [Unsigned] 'State of music on the continent' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 16/182 (February 1849). 117.

[80] [Unsigned] 'Sketchy Account of the latest Parisian gossip.: Quasl Court-gossip. The Devil's Violin. Uninvited Guests.' *Home Journal* 11/161 (10 March 1849). 2.

[81] A. Mason Clarke, 'Biographical Dictionary of Fiddlers' *Musical Standard* 47/47 (24 November 1894). 414.

[82] [Unsigned] 'Musical Notes' *The Monthly musical record* 18/216 (December 1888) 283.

Both sisters were remembered positively in the musical press. In 1874, *The Musical World* remarked that 'There is no one who does not know to what a pitch of perfection the Sisters Milanollo attained: entire mastery over the instrument, and an expression going direct to the heart, because coming from it.'[83] The *Magazine of Music* concurred, 'Theresa and Maria Milanollo enjoyed an extraordinary reputation for their violin playing, Theresa especially being a true artist'[84] This was echoed into the twentieth century, with Teresa's playing particularly praised, and described as 'admirable especially by the expression and depth of the artistic feeling.'[85]

Maria Milanollo's Obituaries

It is telling that the greatest wealth of biographical information on the Milanollo sisters is found in Maria's obituaries. These also reveal more clues as to the sisters' reception. The *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* called the sisters 'equally remarkable for beauty and amiable qualities as for their extraordinary gifts as artists'.[86] *The Athenaeum* described 'the two sisters whose violin playing was so peculiar and interesting an exhibition. Mdlle. Maria deserved the preference for fine spirit and genius in her performance, though she was a less perfect mechanist than her sister.'[87] *The Musical World*'s obituary was similarly revealing:

> Her performance was as attractive as it was extraordinary. ... Perhaps no artist ever gave more unmixed satisfaction; the admiration excited by her rare excellence as a violinist being enhanced by the interest naturally felt in her youth and sex. It was indeed delightful to see a young and modest girl come timidly before the public, and perform the best works of the best masters in a manner which in many respects was unequalled. Her tone was firm and vibrating, her style the most graceful and natural that it is possible to conceive. Whether she played in a concerto or fantasia solus, or took part in a quartett [sic] or a duet with her sister Teresa, she was equally charming, equally astonishing.[88]

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[83] [Unsigned] [Untitled Item] *The Musical World* 52/20 (16 May 1874). 318.

[84] Maurice Strakosch, 'Souvenirs of an Impresario' *The Magazine of Music* 5/11 (November 1888) 259.

[85] Albert Lavignac. *Music and musicians*. eds Henry Edward Krehbiel and William Marchant (New York: H. Hold and company, 1901), 449.

[86] [Unsigned] 'News' *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* (Devizes) 1713 (9 November 1848). 4.

[87] [Unsigned] 'Music and the drama' *The Athenaeum* 1097 (4 November 1848). 1107.

[88] [Unsigned] 'Maria Milanollo' *The Musical World* 23/46 (11 November 1848). 721.

These obituaries reveal more explicitly what many of the reviews only imply; according to these, a large part of the sisters' success was down to their novelty appeal and the visually pleasing spectacle of an attractive girl playing the violin in a suitably feminine manner.

A benchmark for female performance

Despite the critical praise of the more superficial elements of the Milanollos' playing, the impact of their performances in England can be witnessed in how Teresa in particular became a benchmark for female violinists throughout the following decades. The Czech violinist Bertha Brousil (1842-1919) was described in 1856 as a girl who 'plays the violin exquisitely, reminding us of the celebrated Therése Milanollo' and in 1856 as 'The second girl, about 14, [who] already plays the violin as well as Teresa Milanollo; admiration of whom, it seems, induced her to make the violin her instrument.'[89] A few years later, in 1858, the German violinist Sophie Humler (1841-1918) was described as 'the best female violinist we have heard since the famous Theresa Milanollo astonished and delighted the musical world', and in 1859 that 'she promises to be another Teresa Milanollo.'[90] Meanwhile, in 1861, the French violinist Marie Boulay (1846-72) also invoked the comparison, 'Mlle. Marie Boulay, is making a great sensation in Paris. "Since Teresa Milanollo," says the *Gazette Musicale*, "no woman has ever handled the violin and bow with such ease and *disinvoltura* as Mlle. Boulay, and thus the ear and the eye are captivated at once.'[91] Finally, Wilma Norman-Neruda was compared both as an adult and a child performer to the Milanollo sisters. In 1846, 'The sisters Milanollo have found dangerous rivals in the two little Demoiselles Neruda,'[92] and in 1849, 'This little girl is already equal to Teresa Milanollo, and it is impossible even to imagine what she may become.'[93] As an adult, *The Times* spoke of Neruda in 1869 as being a performer 'with whom no lady violinist in our remembrance (not forgetting the Sisters Milanollo) can compare'.[94]

However, the modern crediting of Norman-Neruda with overturning the objections to women violinists is accounted for by the fact that by the time Neruda appeared in England, in some

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[89] [Unsigned] 'Music' *Illustrated London News* no.804 (7th June 1856). 619; [Unsigned] 'Metropolitan & Provincial' *The Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette* no.4466 (14 June 1856). 2.

[90] [Unsigned] 'News' *The Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (16 October 1858). 5; [Unsigned] 'Fine Arts' *Daily News* (London) no.4114 (21 July 1859). n.p.

[91] [Unsigned] 'Art, Science, and Literature' *The Newcastle Daily Journal* no.1714 (14 May 1861). 2.

[92] [Unsigned] 'Fashionable Intelligence' *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin) (2 September 1846). n.p. The reference to 'Demoiselles' is likely to refer to Norman-Neruda's sister Amelie, who often accompanied her on the piano.

[93] [Unsigned] 'Drury-Lane Theatre' *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (17 June 1849). 8.

[94] [Unsigned] 'Observatory' *The Bradford Observer* no.2131 (21 October 1869). 5.

quarters, the memory of the Milanollos was fading. Joseph Bennett remarked in 1892 that by Neruda's *debut,* 'The sisters Milanollo, well known in England some thirty years earlier, were almost forgotten, and the spectacle of a graceful woman playing "like an angel" upon an instrument monopolised by men, was something new and strange.'[95] The *Manchester Guardian* similarly remarked in 1911, 'The sisters Milanollo after a short and brilliant career disappeared leaving no memory behind them.'[96]

Conclusions

During Teresa Milanollo's first solo visit to England, reviews of her performances contained very little in the way of overt objections to her status as a female violinist. It is likely that Teresa's status as a heavily marketed child prodigy enabled her to perform without facing many of the objections and criticisms levelled at adult women performers on the violin. The reviews frequently mention the fashionable audiences and she appears to have mainly attracted attention as a novelty act. The apparent altering of Teresa Milanollo's age, and the marketing of her as a child performer suggests that appearing as a prodigy was more lucrative than forging a career as an adult performer, as well as circumventing some of the issues around adult female performance on the violin.

It is notable that when the sisters returned together to England, although their reception was mainly positive, there was a heightened discussion of the 'prejudice' in reviews and dialogue around their performances. However, although there was arguably a more heavily gendered response to the joint concerts than to Teresa's earlier solo visit, the sisters also seemed to gain more credit as genuine artists.

It is difficult to gauge the success of the Milanollo sisters. Several of their reviews seem to indicate a struggle to fill audiences; indicating that interest in their performances may have been overstated by the press. There was little press about them, other than reviews, and one would expect a greater number of articles or features (in ladies' magazines, if nowhere else) on them, in light of their success, but my research has uncovered no documentation of this sort. However, it is clear that Teresa in particular became a benchmark for female players in the following decades of the nineteenth century, and this suggests that she was seen as a role model for aspiring women violinists.

It is likely that Teresa Milanollo's appearance in England in 1837 as a child performer made her successful return as an adult female violinist possible. It is clear that both sisters encountered objections to their vocation, but the majority of these seem to have been overcome partly by their

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[95] Joseph Bennett 'Some Musical Performers' *The English illustrated magazine* 104 (May 1892). 643.

[96] [Unsigned] 'Lady Hallé' *The Manchester Guardian.* 17 April 1911. 5.

novelty factor, and partly by their clearly impressive technical skill. The largely positive reaction to their performances almost certainly paved the way for future female violinists; however, it is perhaps significant that the sisters never returned to England to perform, and may suggest that they felt the English attitudes towards female players of the violin were not conducive to a solo career in England.

Preface to Chapter 5:

The third quarter of the nineteenth century

The role of female pianists in paving the way for violinists

Professional women musicians in the third quarter of the nineteenth century had a distinct advantage over their predecessors; the careers of women musicians earlier in the century functioned as valuable role models, providing examples of how a career could be made, and having navigated issues of programming and reconciling public performance with notions of appropriate female behaviour.

Female pianists in the mid nineteenth century played a vital role in breaking down barriers to female performance. The presence of high-profile role models in England like Clara Schumann and Arabella Goddard (1836–1922), who carved out successful long-term careers, were hugely important. Nancy B. Reich notes that 'Clara toured extensively with Joachim in England and on the continent from 1854 until the 1880s'.[1] Schumann would therefore have been well-known to English audiences. Goddard continued performing after she was married (to the critic J.W. Davison), she was a staple on the London concert scene. She was a direct contemporary of Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso, and appeared in many of the same concerts as Norman-Neruda. Goddard's performing activities were similar to Neruda's, often performing solo items in concerts where she also participated in chamber music such as piano quartets and trios.

Goddard and Schumann provided an important precedent for female performers, as they continued their high-level performing careers after their marriages. As outlined in my discussion of women violinists pre-1800 and the Milanollo sisters, maintaining a career into adulthood, and especially beyond marriage, was an insurmountable hurdle for many women performers. Players such as Goddard and Schumann, who continued their performance careers on the piano, an instrument that sat comfortably in the female domain, therefore created a model for others to follow, including on more controversial instruments such as the violin, as well as starting to normalise this as a career option. However, it is important to note that Schumann and Goddard were not typical; Nancy Reich's work on Clara Schumann highlights that 'Many of [Schumann's] widely acclaimed female contemporaries made splashy debuts and brilliant appearances but one

[1] Nancy B. Reich, 'Clara Schumann,' in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950,* eds. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986), 271

after the other gave up careers when they married or found they could not keep up with the stresses of combining family and profession.'[2]

In adulthood, Clara Schumann arranged her own concerts, and this was another important aspect of her career in revolutionising female performance, as she provided a model for women who followed her, as they were not so dependent on a man to make arrangements for them. It is also possible that some of these women functioned as informal mentors to each other; for example, Clara Schumann (1819–1896) and Wilma Norman-Neruda were well acquainted, and it would be easy to imagine Norman-Neruda discussing aspects of her career with Schumann, who was nineteen years her senior. Meanwhile, Norman-Neruda and Goddard played in many of the same concerts, and it is possible that having a network of women (albeit small) in similar professional positions might have formed a valuable source of informal support.

Education and the promotion of the violin as an instrument for women

The latter decades of the nineteenth century saw the publication of numerous articles advocating for the violin as an instrument for women. An article from the *Northampton Mercury* in 1874 provides a good example:

> The violin is as much an instrument for girls as the pianoforte. It is an absurd notion that there is anything fast or forward in a violin-playing lady. Fast and forward it may be to adopt the slang, the smoking, and other bad habits of the other sex; but there is nothing more blameworthy in a girl's learning the violin, than in her working a telegraph, or exercising any other rational occupation which it has been the custom to consider, though without just grounds, the exclusive property of men. As an instrument, the violin is, in fact, more suitable for girls than boys, requiring as it does, in a higher degree than any other, that delicacy of manipulation, that careful attention to matters of details, and that neatness of execution with which a girl is naturally endowed more liberally than a boy.[3]

These sorts of articles which supported female violin playing, were aided by a perception in parts of the press that women playing the violin was more common on the continent. The *Daily News* wrote in 1869 that 'the association of the gentler sex with the use of bowed instruments is by no

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[2] Ibid., 250-251.

[3] [Unsigned]'News' *Northampton Mercury* no.8027 (28 November 1874), 3.

means so strange abroad as it may seem here. In some continental countries, not only stringed instruments, but even the flute, is cultivated by ladies.'[4]

Nancy B. Reich notes that across Europe, 'the numbers of female music students swelled in the course of the century.'[5] However, many of these pursued teaching rather than performing careers, and as Reich notes, it is difficult to know how many women ceased their musical careers when they married. Nevertheless, a climate in which women were partaking in music at increasingly high levels would have been conducive to female success on the concert stage, with female performance more normalised. The broadened educational and performance opportunities for women musicians, in conjunction with the advocation of the violin as an instrument for women around the same time, would have made the instrument a much more viable option for women who wanted to play music.

Shifts away from the virtuoso-composer model in the second half of the nineteenth century. Katharine Ellis explains that during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, 'it is the virtuoso-interpreter who emerges as the norm, in contrast to the virtuoso-composer'.[6] Ellis argues that this period saw, 'the male virtuoso-composers moving away from performance of their own works and conforming to a paradigm established largely by female pianists who because of social taboos regarding large-scale composition did not have a work of their own to play.'[7] As outlined in chapter two of this thesis, the virtuoso-composer model presented significant challenges to women performers, who typically struggled to access the requisite education in harmony, counterpoint and composition necessary to fulfil this model. A shift away from this paradigm therefore offered women scope to establish careers as performers, without being dependent on compositional skills.

Reich's work on Clara Schumann exemplifies the 'paradigm' described by Ellis; her discussion of Schumann emphasises the significance of her programming,

> The works she programmed changed the character of the piano recital from a lengthy potpourri of virtuoso works based on popular melodies to a serious composer-

[4] [Unsigned] 'Music', *Daily News* no.7340 (9 November 1869), 2.

[5] Nancy B. Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1890', in *Women & Music: A History,* ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 150.

[6] Katharine Ellis, 'The Structures of Musical Life,' in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 350.

[7] Ellis, 'The Structures of Musical Life,' 350.

> centered program concentrating on a few works by such major composers as Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Robert Schumann, and Brahms.[8]

The emphasis on the composer provided a framework for female performance that centred on the (usually male) composer, allowing the performer a role outside the virtuso-composer model. If the performer was cast in the role of *interpreter*, this may have been more closely aligned with nineteenth century ideas about female performance.

Gender politics in music

Meanwhile, in England, the period around 1870 saw a marked increase in discussions surrounding gender politics in music. These were partly a response to broader writings on gender, such as Mill's *The Subjection of Women,* which argued for equality between the sexes.[9] Writings in the musical press reveal heated debates relating to women's intellect, nature, and the scope of their role in the musical world. One of the most substantial texts was Fanny Raymond Ritter's *Woman as a musician: An art-historical survey*, published in 1877. Although Ritter's work appeared slightly later than the time period under focus in this thesis, it provides an immensely useful illustration of some of the main arguments under discussion in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Alongside making the case for continued expansion of women's role as instrumentalists, one of Ritter's main arguments was that the study of composition should be open to women:

> Why should not women of sufficient intellectual and especial ability to warrant the possibility of their obtaining honourable distinction, make an effort, and, discarding the absurd idea that composition is an affair of instinct, study to compose for immortality also? There is surely a feminine side of composition, as of every other art.[10]

This advocation of women as composers marks something of a sea change in nineteenth-century thought concerning the nature of women's intellect and capacity for original creative output. This had broader implications for instrumental practice; if women were thought to have the intellect for composition, their instrumental performances were no longer confined to the role of interpreter, but rather, could finally be perceived as equal to their male counterparts.

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[8] Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians', 167.

[9] John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women,* New ed, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909). Originally published 1869.

[10] Fanny Raymond Ritter, *Woman as a musician: An art-historical survey* (London: W. Reeves, 1877), 10.

Chapter 5:

'Scatter[ing] all prejudices to the winds': Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso

Introduction

The informal prohibition on women playing the violin started to ease during the 1860s and 70s, with the first female violinists admitted to the Royal Academy of Music in 1872. During these decades, two of the most successful female continental virtuosa violinists, the Moravian Wilma Norman-Neruda (1838-1911) and the French-born, American-based Camilla Urso (c.1840-1902), were active. These two women successfully combined their solo careers with leading chamber ensemble performances in London (the other members of these ensembles being almost exclusively male, aside from the occasional female pianist).[1]

Norman-Neruda and Urso are particularly significant as they appear to have been the first women violinists to sustain careers into and throughout adulthood, making a successful transition from initial performances as child prodigies. The inclusion of regular chamber music playing as a core part of both women's careers indicates a deeper level of acceptance by their peers and audiences than appears to have been the case for earlier female players. Both women feature in much of the modern scholarship on nineteenth-century female violinists, and Norman-Neruda is often highlighted as being significant in the adoption of the violin by women in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Paula Gillett portrays her as a pivotal figure in women's music-making; Norman-Neruda is cited alongside Clara Schumann within the opening paragraph of Gillett's *Musical Women in England.*[2] Similarly, Nancy Reich refers to Norman-Neruda as 'perhaps the best-known European woman violinist of her time', highlighting how she 'was one of the few women who played in chamber groups with male colleagues.'[3] Meanwhile, Yvonne Amthor's biography of Norman-Neruda for the Sophie Drinker Institut remarks that 'the continuity of her career, her

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[1] There is some debate over Urso's exact date of birth. Most sources give the date as 1842, while Schiller's doctoral thesis on Urso argues the case for 1840. Schiller cites a birth certificate with this date, and suggests 'the incorrect birth year seems to have originated from Urso herself, and presumably was used in order to make her more marketable and remarkable as a child prodigy.' Jennifer Schiller, 'Camilla Urso: Pioneer Violinist (1840-1902)' (DMA, College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky, 2006), 6.

[2] Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (Houndmills: MacMillan, 2000), 1.

[3] Nancy B. Reich, 'European Composers and Musicians, ca. 1800-1890', in *Women & Music: A History,* ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 170.

internationality and the high recognition by audience and critics testify to the importance of this musician'.[4] Despite this acknowledgement of her as a pivotal figure in nineteenth-century women's music-making, existing work on Norman-Neruda is limited in its depth, often only warranting a passing mention in texts on broader issues around women or violinists in the nineteenth century.

By contrast, Urso has been the subject of several biographies and academic writings, including articles and chapters by Susan Kagan, Adrienne Fried Block, and Joanna Selleck, and a dissertation by Jennifer Schiller.[5] Contemporary biographical accounts also appeared, such as Charles Barnard's *Camilla: A Tale of a Violin. Being the artist life of Camilla Urso.*[6] The cause of the disparity between writings on Urso and Norman-Neruda is not fully clear. However, as Urso spent much of her life and career in the United States, while Norman-Neruda's was spent in England, this may be resultant of differing directions and focus between American and British scholarship. An alternative explanation may be that Urso's outspokenness about violin playing as a career for women, alongside her advocacy of classical music for popular audiences, cemented her status in American culture and made her a more appealing figure for biography.

This chapter discusses the reception of Norman-Neruda and Urso's solo and chamber performances in London in the period up to 1872: Both women had long and successful careers, and a full discussion of these would be beyond its scope. Therefore, this discussion is intended as a snapshot of the critical reception surrounding the two predominant female violinists performing in England around the time women were first admitted to the Royal Academy of Music for formal study of the violin in 1872. For this reason, although a brief overview of both Norman-Neruda and Urso's broader careers is included, only reviews of their English performances (1869-72) are discussed here. Reviews of Norman-Neruda's childhood performances in England are included in

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[4] Yvonne Amthor, 'Neruda, *Nerudová,* Wilma, *Wilhelmine, Vilemína, Vilhelmina* (Maria, *Marie*, Franziska, Františka), verh. Norman-Néruda, verh. Hallé,' *Europäische Instrumentalistinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, accessed April 1 2018, http://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/cms/index.php/neruda-wilma.

[5] Susan Kagan, 'Camilla Urso: A Nineteenth-Century Violinist's View,' Signs 2, no. 3 (1977); Block, Adrienne Fried Block, 'Two Virtuoso Performers in Boston: Jenny Lind and Camilla Urso,' in *New Perspectives on Music. Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, ed. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992); Johanna Selleck, 'Camilla Urso: A Visiting Virtuoso Brings Music to The People,' in *Music Research. New directions for a new century*, ed. Michael Ewans, Rosalind Halton and John A. Phillips (Amersham: Cambridge Scholar's Press, 2004); Jennifer Schiller, 'Camilla Urso: Pioneer Violinist (1840-1902), (DMA diss., College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky, 2013).

[6] Charles Barnard. *Camilla: A Tale of a Violin. Being the artist life of Camilla Urso* (Loring: Boston, 1874). See also Mary A. Betts, 'Camilla Urso,' in *Eminent women of the age : being narratives of the lives and deeds of the most prominent women of the lives and deeds of the most prominent women of the present generation,* ed. James Parton (Connecticut: S.M. Betts, 1868), These accounts are written in a florid, rather sensationalist style, with little supporting reference or eye to accuracy. Therefore, although making for an interesting read, they do not constitute a necessarily accurate account of Urso's life, and are therefore to be treated with caution.

the discussion, but there is no parallel discussion of Urso's childhood reception, as she did not perform in England until adulthood.

The lives of Camilla Urso and Wilma Norman-Neruda share a striking number of similarities. Like most women violinists before them, both were born into families of professional musicians and started playing the violin at an early age. As outlined in earlier chapters, a handful of female violinists had performed across Europe and visited England with relative success before Urso and Norman-Neruda, though while these earlier female players typically started their careers as successful child prodigies, they struggled to maintain their careers as adults, often ceasing their performing activities when they married. It seems likely that the demands of a performing career conflicted with ideas and conventions about appropriately fulfilling the role of wife and mother. Meanwhile, their novelty value as child prodigies would have diminished as they approached adulthood, and while audiences might have tolerated young girls playing socially unconventional instruments, this tolerance would not readily have extended to adult women performers.

Norman-Neruda and Urso initially fitted this model of an adolescent performing career which was curtailed by marriage; both women married at a young age and ceased performing around this time. However, they both subsequently resumed their careers as touring violinists: Norman-Neruda after she left her first husband in 1869, and Urso after being widowed around 1860.[7] Both women later remarried, and in both cases, their second husbands were actively involved with their careers. In Urso's case, this was her manager Frédéric Luère, and in Norman-Neruda's, her long-time musical collaborator, Charles Hallé. Most importantly though, they seem to have occupied parallel positions in Europe and America as pivotal figures in overcoming the informal prohibition on female violin-playing and earning the acceptance of women as violinists.

Wilma Norman-Neruda

Wilhelmina Norman-Neruda was born in 1838 in Moravia to a musical family.[8] Although her parents expected her to play the piano, she taught herself to play her brother's violin in secret:

> In those days there was rather a strong prejudice against violin-playing among our sex, it was not considered a graceful accomplishment nor a womanly one, but I found it impossible to crush the desire within me to draw the bow across the strings of my

[7] Little biographical information exists about this period of Urso's life; however, Jennifer Schiller's research suggests that Urso's first husband, George M. Taylor, 'died before Camilla was yet 20 years old'. Schiller, 'Camilla Urso,' p.23.

[8] She generally gave her name as 'Wilma', and this is therefore the version of her name which will be used throughout this chapter.

> brother's violin; so I lay in watch for the moment when he would go out, and then stole to his room in order to shut myself up and indulge in the sweet notes of the instrument. Forbidden fruit, indeed, and therefore all the more luscious to taste![9]

After being discovered with the violin by her father (Josef Neruda), she was initially taught by him and then took lessons with Leopold Jansa. Norman-Neruda's childhood was characterised by a rich musical life; she frequently played chamber music with her father and siblings, appearing with them on stage in trio and quartet formations.[10] Josef Neruda acted as a manager for his children and drove their musical careers. They toured German-speaking Europe and Scandinavia from the 1840s onwards, and visited Russia in 1852 and 1860.[11] Norman-Neruda first performed in England in 1849, at the age of 11, and she continued to tour Europe as part of the family troupe until she married the conductor Ludwig Norman in 1864, at which point she started a family and ceased publicly performing. Neruda and Norman settled in Stockholm and had two children. As with many female performers, the marriage marked a shift in Wilma's activities; from 1867 to 1870 she taught at the Swedish Royal Academy of Music. However, the marriage was short-lived, the couple separated after five years, and Wilma returned to performing and touring.[12] This echoes the careers of players such as Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen; a touring career only appearing to be viable without the encumbrance of a husband and children. It is unclear whether Norman-Neruda's children accompanied her to England, or whether they remained with Ludwig Norman in Germany, but this may also have impacted her career decisions.

Following Norman-Neruda's separation from her husband in 1869, she made annual visits to London for the winter and spring seasons. She quickly made her mark on the London music scene, performing a large number of concerts to great acclaim, both as a soloist and a chamber player. Settling in England, she continued to perform well into the 1890s and toured extensively across the continent, America, and Australia, often with Charles Hallé, whom she eventually married in 1888.

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[9] Baroness Von Zedlitz, 'A Chat with Lady Hallé,' *Cassell's Family Magazine* (1894), 779-780.

[10] Yvonne Amthor's biography of Neruda for the Sophie Drinker Institut describes her as 'the third of about ten children'. Amthor, 'Neruda'.

[11] John Clapham, 'Neruda family', *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online,* accessed 10 March 2018, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000019739.

[12] Ibid. It is not clear why the couple separated. They did not formally divorce, presumably due to Wilma's Catholic faith.

This chapter focuses on Norman-Neruda's life before her marriage to Hallé, but a brief discussion of the relationship is included here; in the context of an environment in which marriage and children curtailed the careers of many female musicians, Norman-Neruda and Hallé's musical and personal relationship is particularly significant; the couple worked together as musical collaborators from the outset of her time in England, and their musical lives were intertwined both for the 11 years preceding their marriage and during it. Although Norman-Neruda separated from her first husband around 1869, several biographical accounts from later in the century referred to her being a widow at this stage of her career.

It is not clear whether this was deliberate – widowhood perhaps being more socially acceptable than being separated or divorced[13] – or whether an incorrect assumption was made that she then made no effort to dispel. 'Widowhood' may also have rendered it more acceptable for a woman to be financially independent and performing professionally in order to support herself and any children. Finances certainly seem to have been a concern for Norman-Neruda; the *Musical Standard* reported that 'She was prevented by financial reasons from ever retiring from her profession…[she] continued to teach and give public performances until the very end.'[14] This may in some part explain the longevity of Norman-Neruda's career; ceasing performance may not have been an option financially for her, and it is possible she may also have needed to provide for her two children.

Following her separation from Ludwig Norman, Neruda met and worked frequently with Charles Hallé; several sources suggest that a romantic relationship between the two was an open secret.[15] In 1888, three years after Ludwig Norman's death, Neruda and Hallé married. As both Neruda and Hallé were Catholic, it seems likely that either faith or social conventions may have

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[13] For example, an 1894 interview stated that '[Neruda's] husband, however, died shortly after their marriage'. Von Zedlitz, 'A Chat with Lady Hallé,': 783-4.[13] Robert Layton's entry for Ludwig Norman in *Grove* refers to a 'divorce', while other sources refer to a 'separation'. It is therefore unclear whether the marriage breakdown resulted just in a permanent separation or formal divorce. Robert Layton, 'Norman, (Fredrik Vilhelm) Ludvig,' *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online,* accessed 7 November 2021, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000020076. It is also unclear whether the misinformation about Neruda's marital status was deliberate, or whether she may have allowed an assumption by the press to go unchecked.

[14] [Unsigned] 'Lady Hallé,' *Musical Standard* 35, no. 904 (Apr 29, 1911), 19.

[15] For example, in her memoir, the singer Clara Kathleen Rogers remarked that when she toured with Hallé and Neruda (Rogers does not specify the date), 'it was then already a foregone conclusion that Norman Neruda would be the future Lady Halle,–the prolonged life of a long-time hopelessly sick wife being then the only obstacle to their union.' Clara Kathleen Rogers, *Memories of a musical career* (Massachusetts: Privately printed at the Plimpton Press, 1932), 377-378.

prohibited Neruda remarrying while her first husband was alive.[16] More significantly, remaining (in effect) single may perhaps have guaranteed Neruda the freedom to continue her performing career. Interestingly, Charles Hallé's biographer Robert Beale has suggested that the the timing of the eventual marriage with Hallé's knighthood in the same year 'may have been the result of a gentle hint from on high [the Palace]'; if Beale's suggestion is correct, it is possible that left to her own devices, Neruda may have preferred not to remarry, perhaps in order to safeguard her career.[17] Following their marriage, alongside their British performances, the Hallés undertook several long-distance tours, including to Australia in both 1890 and 1891 and South Africa in 1895.

Norman-Neruda was regarded as being particularly influential in overturning the 'ban' on women playing the violin, with one nineteenth-century commentator remarking that 'Madame Neruda, like a musical St. George, has gone forth, violin and bow in hand, to fight the dragon of prejudice.'[18] Though the casting of Norman-Neruda in the role of masculine hero may seem unexpected, such an analogy is less surprising in the context of the association between violinists and heroic themes in the nineteenth-century imagination, as well as its reflection of a broader critical language intrinsically bound up with masculine performance idioms.[19] However, unusually for a woman performer, reviews of Norman-Neruda's solo playing contained very few mentions of her physical appearance, or references to 'feminine' aspects of her playing. She appears to have been regarded as a serious artist rather than a novelty, and accepted as a performer equal to her male counterparts. Interestingly, Paula Gillett argues that,

> [Norman-Neruda's] role was clearly not that of a female St. George, but rather of an active and influential participant in a dynamically shifting situation… There is no doubt that the gracious Wilma Neruda eased the transition for women violinists, but had she not appeared, another gifted player would surely have performed the same service.[20]

While Gillett's point is undoubtedly true–inevitably, eventually, another woman would have fulfilled this role–the question is at what point this would have happened.

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[16] Hallé and Neruda's Catholicism discussed in Charles Hallé, *The autobiography of Charles Hallé: With correspondence and diaries,* ed.Michael Kennedy (London: Elek, 1972), 8.

[17] Robert Beale, *Charles Hallé: A musical life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 182.

[18] Lady Blanche Lindsay, 'How to play the violin', *The Girl's Own Paper*, 15 (1880), 232.

[19] For more in-depth discussion of the violin's militaristic associations during the nineteenth-century, see Maiko Kawabata, 'Virtuoso Codes of Violin Performance: Power, Military Heroism, and Gender (1789-1830)', *19th Century Music,* 28, no.2 (2004), 89–107.

[20] Gillett, *Musical Women in England,* 98.

Camilla Urso

Camilla Urso was a contemporary of Norman-Neruda's, born in 1840 in Nantes into a family of professional musicians. She started violin lessons at six and studied with Massart at the Paris Conservatoire from the age of seven. Nineteenth-century sources often claimed Urso to be the institution's first female student, but this has been contested in more recent scholarship.[21] One of the many benefits of this training was the opportunity to play string quartets. An early biography claimed that 'Massart advised Camilla to join a quartette in order to perfect herself in reading music at sight. Once a week she spent an hour or two in playing with three others at the Conservatory'.[22] One of these regular collaborators was the Polish virtuoso-composer Henryk Wieniawski, a contemporary of Urso's at the institution. Sightreading as part of a string quartet also formed part of the Conservatoire examinations. [23]

On completing her studies, Urso was lured to the United States with the offer of a lucrative three-year tour. The tour never materialised and Urso was left stranded, but nevertheless managed to launch a career, making her New York debut aged ten. She took a career break from 1855 to 1863, during which time she moved to Nashville with her parents and shortly afterwards married her first husband, had three children and was then widowed. In 1863 she returned to performing and married Frédéric Luère, who later became her manager; the couple later had two more children. Urso's motivations for returning to performing are not known, but may have been triggered by financial necessity. Alternatively, it is possible that Urso's second marriage provided a more supportive environment for her to recommence a performing career, if domestic demands or spousal opposition had formed obstacles to this during her first marriage. Jennifer Schiller's work highlights that 'by her twenty-first birthday, Urso was already the mother of three children', and Schiller speculates that, in conjunction with being widowed at a young age, needing to provide for her children may have necessitated Urso returning to her performing career.[24]

Urso forged a successful career for herself in the United States, combining chamber music with appearances as a soloist alongside many of the country's leading orchestras. She was well received by the American press, and made tours across the United States, Australia and New Zealand, South Africa and Europe, including performances in England between 1871–72. For many

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[21] Freia Hoffman has identified Félicité Lebrun as having studied at the conservatoire from 1799. Freia Hoffman, *'Urso, Camilla': Europäische Instrumentalistinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*. Accessed September 30 2018. http://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/urso-camilla.

[22] Barnard, *Camilla,* 57.

[23] Ibid., 58.

[24] Schiller, 'Camilla Urso', 7.

of these, she had her own concert troupe, managed by her husband, and she often led chamber music–such as string quartets and trios–in her concerts alongside solo items.

When Urso arrived in the United States, female violinists were rare, and both nineteenth-century and modern writers refer to her as being pivotal in the acceptance there of the violin as an instrument for girls, casting her in a role similar to that of Norman-Neruda in England.[25] Later in her life, Urso was particularly significant for being outspoken about life as a woman violinist. Most female players up until this point (including Norman-Neruda) had diplomatically avoided being drawn on the subject, but Urso was one of the first to speak and write frankly about the issues faced by women violinists. She particularly advocated for the inclusion of women in orchestras, one of her most notable contributions being the delivery of her article 'Women and the Violin: Women as Performers in the Orchestra' as a speech at the 'Woman's Musical Congress in Chicago' in 1893. In this, Urso argued the case for women as orchestral violinists and for equality of pay, asserting that female violinists were equally talented as their male counterparts, and that in her experience, their playing was more expressive, and they were more diligent and reliable than male players.

Chamber music

Barriers to chamber music for women musicians

In the first half of the nineteenth century, women faced multiple barriers in accessing chamber music as instrumentalists, both in the public and private realm, and particularly as string players. Although chamber music was a popular form of entertainment, women did not typically play string instruments even within the realm of the home. Christina Bashford's work on chamber music during the period explains that 'serious musicking was a regular recreation in many country houses and functioned alongside the better-known gentlefolk pursuits of hunting, shooting, and fishing.'[26] String quartets were particularly popular, and culture enabled fluid movement across class boundaries, with groups often comprising a combination of upper-class amateurs and working professional musicians. However, this fluidity did not transcend gender; women were not invited to participate, other than as pianists, where they might join for occasional piano trios or quartets.

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[25] For example, Freia Hoffmann argues that 'Her meteoric career triggered a similar wave of successors in the US, as was the case with the sisters Milanollo on mainland Europe and Wilma Norman-Neruda in England.' Freia Hoffmann, 'Urso, Camilla, Camille, Emilie-Camille, verh. Luère, Luères,Lueres, Luere, Luer,' *Europäische Instrumentalistinnen des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*. Accessed September 30 2018. http://www.sophie-drinker-institut.de/urso-camilla.

[26] Christina Bashford, 'Historiography and Invisible Musics: Domestic Chamber Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of the American Musicological Society,* 63, no.1 (2010), 311.

Although women did not take part in string quartets, as Bashford has noted, they nevertheless found alternative means to engage with the repertoire, such as playing piano transcriptions.[27]

In England, female string players were generally barred from attending the Royal Academy of Music, which was at this point the only English conservatoire. They therefore faced challenges in accessing instrumental tuition and opportunities for formal training in chamber music. Even if a woman violinist managed to access this training and gain ensemble experience, she then faced the challenge of chamber music politics; for a woman to take part in a string quartet, she firstly had to make the right social or musical contacts to be invited to play. In addition, the male players would need to regard her as an equal, or, in the case of her leading, be willing to accept her in an authoritative role.

However, English attitudes towards women violinists gradually relaxed over the course of the century. While the handful who performed in England during the first half of the century were almost exclusively from continental Europe, by its closing decades female players were admitted to conservatoires and often forged careers as chamber musicians after graduating. Although women were barred from joining professional orchestras until the early twentieth century, these chamber music activities marked an important step towards their eventual inclusion.

By the close of the nineteenth century, chamber music performance offered significant opportunities for women to establish performing careers beyond the role of soloist. This was particularly important since the demands of a solo performing career and touring schedule often conflicted with societal expectations around female roles in marriage and family life. In contrast, chamber music, being more closely aligned with the domestic sphere, may have offered the potential for a less contentious avenue for female performance. The combination of this with the high level of visibility of artists like Wilma Norman-Neruda, whose quartet played in regular chamber concert series in London, may have resulted in a perception of chamber music as offering more fixed performance opportunities, circumventing some of the difficulties around a career exclusively as a soloist. Chamber music therefore represented a potential career in music performance for women violinists and gave increased visibility to women who successfully carved out careers for themselves as professional string players. Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso were not the first women to play in quartets; as outlined in chapter four, Maria and Teresa Milanollo included some quartet-playing as part of their concert activities, but their impact as chamber musicians seems to have been limited, with their quartet performances taking the form of occasional appearances, presenting little challenge to the status quo. As female pioneers in this genre, Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso are therefore particularly important, as their

[27] Ibid., p.309.

success in the early 1870s appears to have inspired the generation of women who pursued careers as chamber musicians in subsequent decades. In some ways, it is therefore perhaps surprising that two professional solo violinists chose to delve into the world of quartet playing, not only challenging the status quo by playing the violin, but also breaking into an exclusively male domain, and assuming the musically authoritative role of quartet leader.

Norman-Neruda and Urso's performances as chamber musicians

Norman-Neruda first performed in England in April 1849 at the age of 11. She returned as an adult in May 1869, and by November of the same year, had appeared as the leader in a variety of quartet concerts. She subsequently made annual visits to London for the winter and spring seasons, and most notably spent many years playing regularly and leading quartets in the Monday and Saturday 'Pops' Concerts at St James' Hall.[28] The 'Pops' formed part of a broader trend of increased chamber music concerts in the mid-nineteenth century, but were particularly significant as the proximity of St. James' Hall to the West End rendered them accessible to, as Bashford observes, 'people ever further down the social scale'.[29] Indeed the critic George Bernard Shaw described them as having 'contributed, more than any other cause, perhaps, to the spread and enlightenment of musical taste and culture in England.'[30] Norman-Neruda played at the invitation of Joseph Joachim – she took on the role of first violin in the 'Pops' quartet during the winter season, while Joachim took a counterpart role, leading during the spring season. Norman-Neruda and Joachim developed a friendly relationship, and the two players were often compared, including by Joachim himself, who remarked that 'when people have given her a fair hearing, they will think more of her and less of me.'[31] This public endorsement and support of Norman-Neruda by Joachim may have been a significant factor in acceptance of her as a quartet leader.

Norman-Neruda's ensemble playing was especially significant because, unlike her female predecessors, it comprised a substantial and regular part of her performance activities in London. She often played solo items in the same concerts as the quartet performances and these two aspects of her career were therefore firmly intertwined. Quartet playing probably felt quite a natural part of Norman-Neruda's activities, as in her youth she regularly played string quartets and chamber music with her father and siblings, giving her valuable training which was not available to

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[28] Amthor, '*Neruda*'.

[29] Bashford, 'Historiography and Invisible Musics', 315.

[30] George Bernard Shaw and Dan H. Laurence, *Shaw's Music: The Complete Musical Criticism,* ed. by Dan H. Laurence, 3 vols, 2nd rev. edn (London: Bodley Head, 1989), i, 907.

[31] Von Zedlitz, 'A Chat with Lady Hallé', 783.

many of her female peers.[32] Norman-Neruda seems to have slotted into the London chamber music scene relatively quickly; one obituary remarked that her position as leader at the Monday Popular Concerts was met 'with instantaneous success.'[33] By the autumn of 1869, Norman-Neruda seems to have cemented her role within London chamber music, with *The Musical World* reporting that 'Madame Norman-Neruda is engaged as principal violin at all the concerts before Christmas.'[34]

The reception of Norman-Neruda and Urso's performances in London offer some valuable insights into public attitudes towards women in quartets. Reviews of Norman-Neruda's first appearances as a quartet player were predominantly positive, but it was clear that her role of woman leader was a source of curiosity for London audiences. *The Musical World* reported:

> There was a startling novelty in the performance. The quartet party was led by a woman; and the leader played with such power, force, dignity and fire as few indeed of the most gifted men are endowed withal…in a single eight-bar phrase Mdme. Norman-Neruda scattered all prejudices to the winds… the bare white arms of the gifted lady were as full of power as of grace; that the tone produced was surprisingly round, rich, and pure; that the intonation was never at fault; and that every individual passage was delivered with unfaltering skill, and masterly decision. …Madame Neruda, we must hasten to explain, needs no special consideration on account of her sex.[35]

The Orchestra took a similar tone:

> Strange as, despite many instances of female proficiency, a violin always looks in the hands of a woman, the mastery of Madame Neruda over her instrument proclaims her the thorough artist. Her tone is rich and full, her bowing free, her phrasing excellent, her capability of managing the pianissimi and fortissimi unexceptionable. All the works undertaken by her betrayed not only a perfect conception of the composer's meaning but also a power and ease scarcely to be looked in the bare white arms which so rivetted [sic] the attention of the audience.[36]

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[32] Clapham, 'Neruda family'.

[33] [Unsigned] 'Lady Hallé,' *Musical Standard* 35, no. 904 (Apr 29, 1911), 19.

[34] [Unsigned] 'Advertisement,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 43 (Oct 23, 1869), 736.

[35] [Unsigned] 'Monday Popular Concerts', *The Musical World* 47.47 (1869), 797.

[36] [Unsigned] 'Concerts', *The Orchestra*, 13.320 (1869), 116.

Many reviews such as these, dating from the first few months of Norman-Neruda's appearances leading quartets, took a positive approach, and seem to have engaged with her playing in artistic terms, even if this was undermined by the discussion of female proficiency and the eroticised undertones in the description of her performance; both these aspects were recurring themes in reviews of female violinists, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century. She also seems to have avoided much of the criticism often directed at solo women violinists, who frequently encountered accusations of lacking the 'vigour', tonal strength, or intellectual understanding to play substantial works, while facing disparaging remarks about playing trifles when they performed smaller-scale works.

However, this was not the case in all reviews, with both Norman-Neruda's tone and intellectual capacity criticised in a small number of critical responses, such as in *The Observer*:

> It is rare to see a lady violinist of such skill. Her execution is peculiarly neat and highly-finished, and her shake surpasses almost anything we ever heard…The only objection we could find to her playing is a want of tone. The violin in her hands is a softened and subdued instrument, and has something of the effect produced by the use of the mute; but her command over the mechanical requisites of her art cannot be questioned. The unpleasant effect caused by the ungraceful attitude, with the head thrown back in a defiant style, and the rapid evolutions of the large bow are quite lost sight of in the agreeable sound produced from the strings.[37]

Meanwhile, *The Musical World* also criticised Norman-Neruda's tone as being inferior to that of Joachim, asserting that this 'is where, on such an instrument as the fiddle, a woman must inevitably fall short of a man'.[38] More interestingly though, the same piece also included a discussion concerning her capacity as an interpreter, which remarked on her playing of Beethoven that 'The ripe productions of the greatest of musicians are out of her intellectual reach…in Mendelssohn she is showy and brilliant; but in the larger and profounder works of Beethoven she is somewhat out of her depth.'[39] The discussion of Norman-Neruda as interpreter ties into broader nineteenth-century ideas about the limits of female intellect, and a critical dialogue evident in parts of the press, which allowed women to succeed in surface-level technique, whilst insisting that they lacked the intellectual capacity to understand the intention of larger scale works by 'great' composers

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[37] [Unsigned] 'Monday Popular Concerts', *The Observer*, 14 November 1869, 6.

[38] [Unsigned] 'Monday Popular Concerts', *The Musical World*, 48.5 (1870), 71-72.

[39] Ibid.

such as Beethoven. Although Norman-Neruda usually managed to escape such judgements, this review offers a rare example of the criticism levelled at her.

Although reviews indicate that both critics and audiences found Norman-Neruda's leading rather a novelty, the majority of reviews were overwhelmingly positive. The handful of reviews which found fault with her playing appear to have relied on typical criticisms of female players relating to tone and musical intellect. However, none of the critical responses seem to have indicated any explicit criticism of her as a leader, or any suggestion that this might have been an unsuitable role for a woman.

By the time of her first appearances in England, Norman-Neruda had already made a name for herself on the continent as a serious soloist and was also well connected within European musical circles, counting friendships and musical collaborations with Joachim, Vieuxtemps and Hallé among others. Indeed, several sources indicate that it was Vieuxtemps who encouraged Norman-Neruda to extend her initial stay in London.[40] The endorsement and respect of these eminent (male) performers may well have aided in positively influencing the attitudes of the press and the public towards her. Perhaps most tellingly, after the first few months of initial press interest subsided, much of the critical reception of Norman-Neruda's playing was indistinguishable from that of her male counterparts. Reviews were fleeting, and those which were longer predominantly focused on aspects of the music rather than including extended discussions of the players; she seems to have been accepted genuinely as an equal.

While Norman-Neruda set an important precedent for women leading string quartets, Camilla Urso's performances were also important in paving the way for female violinists in chamber music, although rather less is known about her performances. Urso visited England between December 1871 and September 1872; between March and June 1872, she led quartet performances in a number of concerts, often in addition to solo items.

Although Urso's English quartet appearances were few in number, reviews of these provide valuable further insights regarding the reception of performances by women leaders. Urso played in string quartets in her United States performances, and awareness of this reached the European press at an early stage; in 1863, well before Norman-Neruda's appearances, on hearing that Urso intended to tour Europe, the *Musical World* speculated 'May we hope, then, to hear Mdlle. Urso leading the quartets at the Monday Popular Concerts?'[41] Although it took another nine years for this to come to fruition, it is nonetheless significant that Urso was well-known enough in England

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[40] Von Zedlitz, 'A Chat with Lady Hallé,' 784 and [Unsigned] 'Lady Hallé,' *Musical Standard* 35, no. 904 (Apr 29, 1911), 19.

[41] [Unsigned] 'Dinorah at Zurich', *The Musical World*, 41.14 (1863), 214.

for it to be suggested she lead at the Monday concerts, and that the London music establishment was apparently receptive to this idea.

Camilla Urso's first London appearances took place in 1871, when she gave a handful of solo performances of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64, including at the Crystal Palace and Philharmonic Concerts series, followed in 1872 by a variety of solo and chamber ensemble performances. Urso's first appearance as a quartet player in England seems to have been in March 1872 at St. George's Hall. An advertisement stated that she would play 'the first violin part in Schubert's Quartet in D minor, in Mendelssohn's Trio in the same key, and in Hummel's Quintet in E flat minor' at 'Mr Ganz's concert'.[42] Urso's reputation clearly preceded her; in advance of this first performance, *The Times* described her as 'the distinguished violinist from Paris'.[43] During her English appearances, she played in a range of flexible chamber music ensembles, performing quartets by Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Haydn; string and piano trios by Mendelssohn, Hummel, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Jansa, Schubert, Onslow, and Robert Schumann, as well as piano quartets by Robert Schumann and Mozart, and quintets by Hummel and Dussek.

Although it is not clear who organised Urso's appearances in London in 1872, it is likely that a link with the violinist and conductor Wilhelm Ganz was significant. Urso played in several of a six-week series of chamber music concerts at St George's Hall in the spring of 1872, directed by Ganz, as well as several soirées and chamber concerts of the New Philharmonic Society, an organisation which Ganz was heavily involved with (he later became co-conductor and then director). However, as Jennifer Schiller's work on Urso notes, 'most of her appearances were private concerts at private homes'[44]. Consequently, it is harder to glean details regarding these performances and their reception.[45] Other appearances included quartets at piano recital concerts and 'musical mornings' of her quartet colleagues and musical collaborators.

Reviews of Urso's playing contained significantly more references to her gender than were typically found in reviews of Norman-Neruda, and critical reactions were rather more mixed. While Norman-Neruda's reviews were almost unanimously positive, many of Urso's contained outright criticism or implied pejoratives relating to gender. Urso's reviews are, therefore, rather more useful in ascertaining a broader spectrum of responses to women performers. A typical example can be found in a review of one of Wilhelm Ganz's Saturday Evening Concerts, published in *The Era,* which described Camilla Urso as 'the great feature of the evening', and remarked that:

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[42] [Unsigned] 'Waifs', *The Musical World*, 50.9 (1872), 145.

[43] [Advertisement] *The Times*, 2 March 1872, 1.

[44] Schiller, 'Camilla Urso', 42.

[45] Ibid.

> Madame Urso is certainly one of the finest players we have heard for a long time…. There was none of the weakness we are accustomed to associate with feminine playing, the bold opening movement of Schubert's [quartet in D minor] being led off with as much vigour as any masculine player, save and except Herr Joachim, is capable of infusing. Madame Urso's bowing is wonderfully energetic and animated, her tone is large, full, and brilliant, and her execution most masterly. … She plays her composer with a genuine reverence for his ideas rather than her own, and in more than one instance sacrificed opportunities for display in rigidly adhering to the text.[46]

Despite the superficially positive tone, the discussions of expected subservience of the female artist to the male composer and allusions to stereotypically 'weak' female playing, again betray the perceptions of women players that Urso and Norman-Neruda still faced.

While Norman-Neruda often seemed to escape the typical criticism of women violinists lacking tone or vigour, tonal strength was a common theme in reviews of many nineteenth-century female players, including Urso. For example, *The Musical Standard* remarked of Ganz's third Saturday concert that:

> Our sense of gallantry, as well as the prescriptive right of custom, demands that we should first notice the *primo violino,* Madame Camilla Urso…that she is a gifted musician is at once evidenced by the fact of her so ably rendering some of the most difficult music the masters of the art ever wrote; in all those feminine qualities which may aptly be applied to the violin–viz.., the refinement, softness, expression, she is most successful; but for fire and energy, and breadth of tone, we will not compare her with her masculine rivals.[47]

While acknowledging Urso's musicianship, the message appears to be that she might be considered successful in the more 'feminine' aspects of playing, but she could never truly hope to be considered as a player of equal stature to her male colleagues. Meanwhile, the benevolent 'gallantry' of the reviewer, which set the tone for much of the review, serves to further undermine Urso's credibility.

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[46] [Unsigned] 'Our Contemporaries', *The Musical World,* 50.17 (1872), 269.

[47] [Unsigned] 'St. George's Hall', *Musical Standard*, 2.398 (1872), 135.

Similarly, the same publication remarked of Urso's appearance at the fourth Ganz concert that:

> Though Madame Urso led the Mendelssohn quartet with all the ease and polish of a practised quartet player, we were not quite satisfied; her tone though full and round seemed dull, wanted the ringing silvery brightness of tone which should form one of the greatest charms of a fine solo player.[48]

This critique of Urso's lack of power or tone is particularly interesting in light of other reviews which praised this aspect of her playing. A review in *The Musical World,* reporting on the same event, highlighted Urso's tone and musicianship alongside the 'feminine' traits, 'In broadness of style, fulness of tone, and mode of phrasing she vies with the most renowned classical violinists of the day, and adds the charms of refinement and elegance.'[49] Meanwhile, critical response to the third Ganz concert, published in *The Orchestra*, was similarly positive:

> The Third of Mr. Ganz's series of Saturday Evening Concerts again brought forward the admirable artistic capacity of Mdme. Camilla Urso, who has approved herself a violinist of rare order. Nothing better could be imagined that the sustenance of her part of the first of Beethoven's Rasoumowski set of quartets—that in F, which she led with a breadth, freedom, and accuracy which stamp her among the first artists of her school.[50]

Although reviews were few and brief, Urso generally appears to have been regarded with equal standing to her male collaborators, with *The Observer* remarking of one concert that 'The names of the *artistes* who took part in these several choice pieces are in themselves satisfactory guarantees that they were done full justice to; and so they were.'[51] Interestingly, there seems to have been little comparison made between Urso and Norman-Neruda as quartet players, despite them both performing in London in 1872.

Although Urso only visited England once, reviews of her performances are nonetheless useful to measure against those of Norman-Neruda as a barometer of critical responses and attitudes. Urso's reviews reveal a more complex dialogue around female performance. Although no direct criticism of her as leader seems evident, her authority as a player was undermined in many

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[48] [Unsigned] 'St. George's Hall', *Musical Standard*, 2.399 (1872), 152.

[49] [Unsigned] 'Concerts Various', *The Musical World*, 50.13 (1872), 206.

[50] [Unsigned] 'Concerts', *The Orchestra* 17.442 (1872), 372.

[51] [Unsigned] 'Mr. Ganz's Saturday Evening Concerts', *The Observer*, 17 March 1872, 3.

reviews by the criticisms levelled at her regarding tone and power. Meanwhile, the repeated emphasis on 'feminine' traits of Urso's playing simultaneously seem to mark an acceptance of her playing, with a new, feminised critical language emerging in response to the success of female players, while also functioning as an implicit criticism in some reviews.

Reviews of Norman-Neruda as a child performer

Wilma Neruda's first appearances in England in summer 1849, aged 11, took place alongside her siblings Amalie (piano) and Victor (cello). The initial performances took place at Princess's Theatre, where they provided entertainment between the acts of operas during May 1849.[52] Following these appearances at the Princess's, the Nerudas spent a week playing in Manchester, commencing with an evening performance at the concert hall on 28th May, followed by a series of theatre engagements.[53] It seems that at this point, the family were mainly dependent on novelty value; the trio were advertised as appearing as part of an 'immense attraction for the race days', at Manchester's Theatre Royal, the penultimate night of which billed their performance sandwiched between a 'comedy' and a 'farce'.[54] However, their return to London was marked by two important engagements for Wilma: solo performances at the seventh of the prestigious Philharmonic Concerts, conducted by Costa, and at a private concert at Buckingham Palace for Queen Victoria.

Wilma's repertoire during these performances mainly consisted of flashy show pieces, chosen for their exhibition of a variety of technical feats, and commensurate novelty appeal. The staple repertoire comprised Ernst's *Carnaval de Venise* and Vieuxtemps' Op.15 trio *Les arpèges*. Additional items varied by concert, but followed a similarly virtuosic theme, including Artot's *'Souvenirs de Bellini',* Zach's *Variations Concertantes* trio and Vieuxtemps' *Yankee Doodle* trio. However, for the more prestigious performances at the Manchester Concert Hall and the Philharmonic Concert, Wilma played a more substantial De Beriot concerto.[55]

Like Ernst's *Carnaval de Venise,* Vieuxtemps *Les arpèges* was a technical feat. As its title suggests, much of the work centred around fast technically demanding arpeggiated figures, supplemented by showy harmonics, double stops and long scalic runs. Artot's *Souvenirs de Bellini* forms another example of the genre, characterised by the use of double stops both at speed in

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[52] [Advertisement] *The Observer,* May 20, 1849, 1.

[53] [Unsigned] 'Concert Hall,' *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester, UK), May 30, 1849, 6.

[54] [Advertisement] *The Manchester Guardian,* May 30, 1849. 4.

[55] There were six De Beriot violin concerti written by 1849, yet it is not clear from the advertisements or reviews which Wilma Neruda played. This is probably due in part to the vagaries of the nineteenth-century press, but does also suggest that audiences were more interested in hearing Neruda than attending in order to hear a particular concerto.

high positions on the instrument and to create an accompaniment type figure alongside the melodic line.

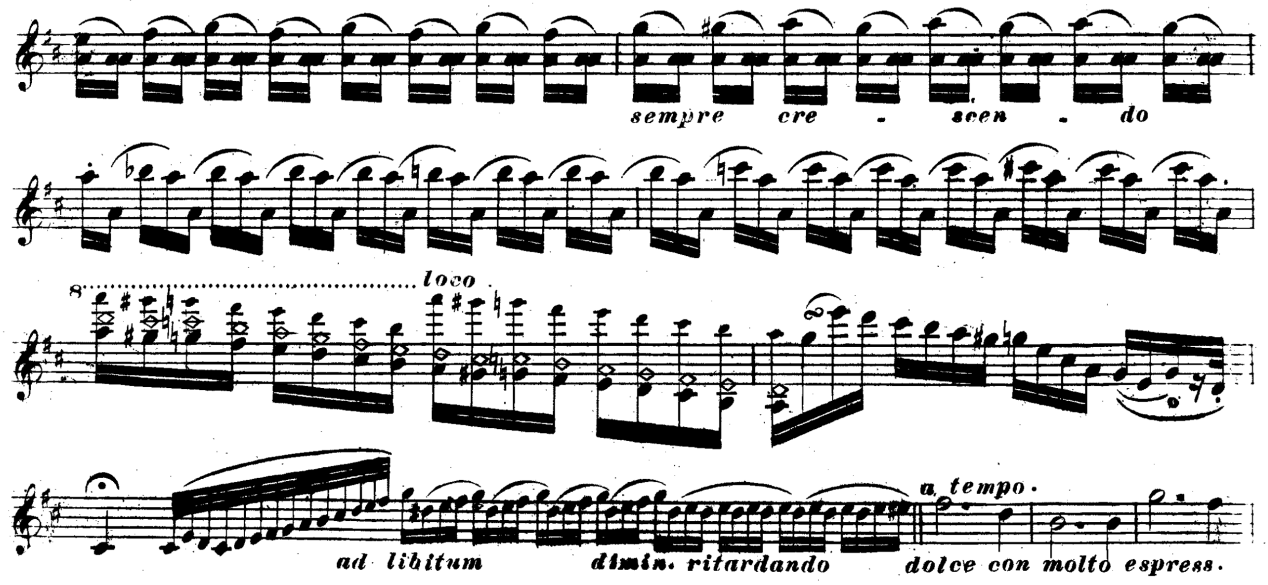

Fig. 5.1: Vieuxtemps, Capriccio, Op.15, '*Les arpèges*'

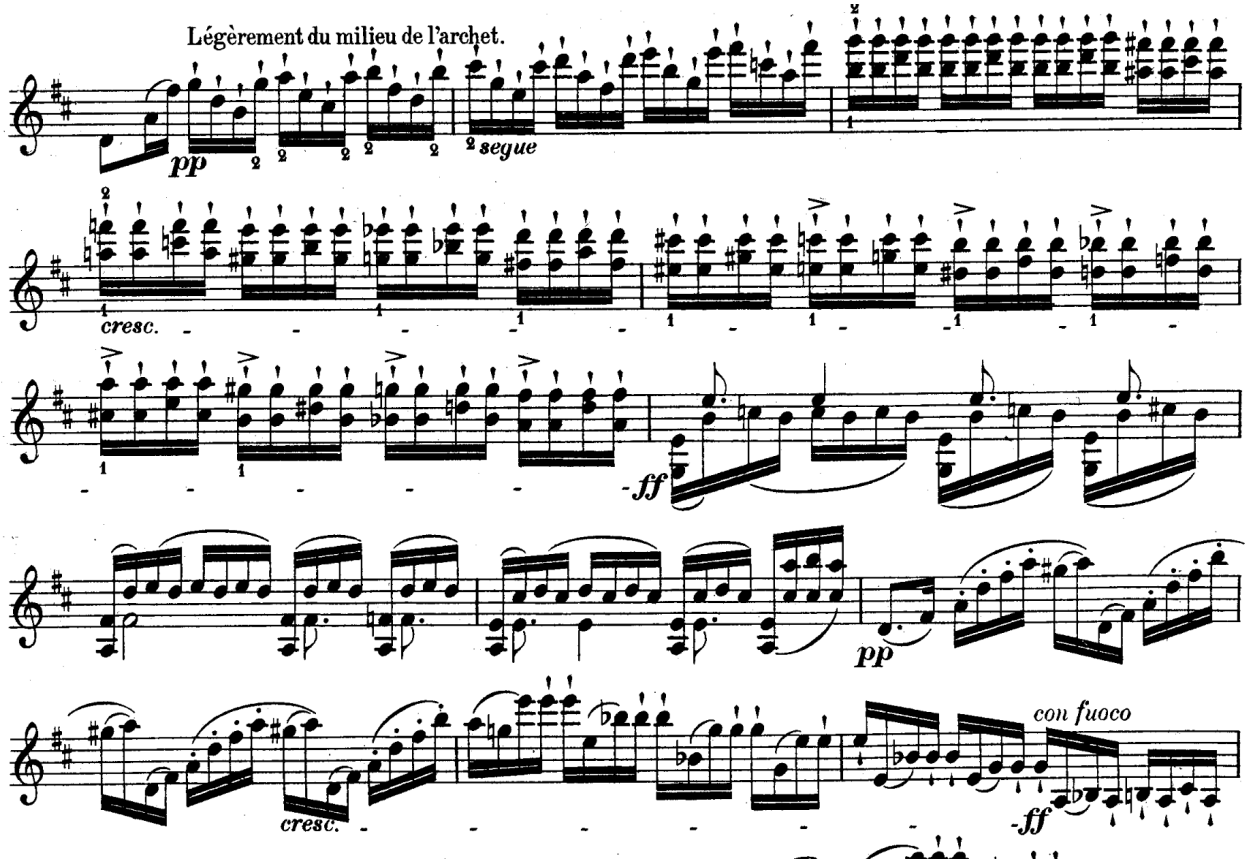

Fig. 5.2: Artôt, Souvenirs de Bellini, Op.4

Critical reactions to the Neruda family's appearances at the Princess's Theatre were unanimously positive; the family were well received, with Wilma particularly singled out for praise. However, the tone of several reviews indicated that they were reviewed as an interesting entertainment rather than as serious artists. *The Observer* remarked 'There are folks who admire exhibitions of this kind, and to them are accordingly recommended the displays of the Neruda family,'[56] while *Bell's Life in London* advised 'Those who are curious about musical phenomena may advantageously spend half an hour at the Princess's in listening to this little prodigy, whose style and execution are equally remarkable.'[57]

Where the London reviews of the Princess's theatre appearances were brief and mainly focused on the novelty attraction of the family, the Manchester reviews were significantly longer and demonstrated a far more critically engaged response. For example, *The Manchester Guardian's* review read:

> She is not a mere cleverly-taught girl; she evidently appreciates all she does. She has all the "points" of a first-rate violinist, though of course in a less degree. Her tone is light, but pure, sparkling, and agreeable; her bowing is exceedingly graceful and firm, and her fingering perfectly steady. The harmonics she uses sparingly, but neatly; but arpeggios, and pizzicatos with the left hand, dashing the bow upon the strings for the stopped notes–(one of Sivori's favourite effects)–double-stopping, and all the other achievements of the expert mechanist, she exhibits with the ease and finish of an experienced player.[58]

This marks a broader evaluation of Wilma's performance than found in the London reviews, considering musical and technical aspects of her playing. However, the comment about her playing being 'in a less degree' than a 'first-rate violinist' is ambiguous in whether it might relate to age or gender. The *Manchester Times* was similarly positive, writing:

> [The Neruda siblings] play with a quiet grace, a fulness and depth of expression quite at variance with the generality of juvenile exhibitors; and they are evidently in earnest, and in love with their work. There is something approaching to the wonderful in the playing

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[56] [Unsigned] 'Princess's Theatre,' *The Observer* (London), May 06, 1849, 2.

[57] [Unsigned] 'The Drama,' *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (13 May, 1849), 3.

[58] [Unsigned] 'Concert Hall,' *The Manchester Guardian* (Manchester, UK), May 30, 1849, 6.

> of the young violinist, when we listen to the tone and mark the execution of a child twelve years old … It is not a little lady playing upon the violin we go to hear, but a lofty and graceful spirit drawing forth, from that small instrument, tones and utterances that are in harmony with her own feelings.[59]

Although there is little technical detail included in the review, the writer's advocacy of the family as serious artists indicates a more sincere critical engagement than was found in the London reviews. Most significantly, it is worth noting that where the London reviews recommended the family's performances to those interested in novelties, the *Manchester Times* specifically recommended them to musicians.[60] Most of the Nerudas' performances in Manchester took place at theatres, however, their first appearance there took place at the Concert Hall, and it is possible that this initial introduction of Wilma and her siblings as serious artists rather than as theatre performers had a bearing on their reception. Wilma's choice of repertoire may also have been significant; a De Beriot concerto formed the centrepiece of her Concert-Hall performance, alongside Ernst's *Carnival* and a Vieuxtemps Trio. The De Beriot was repeated twice more at theatre performances, presumably in preparation for its imminent performance at the Philharmonic Concerts, and it is likely that this choice of a substantial concerto again reinforced the idea of Wilma as a genuine musician rather than an entertaining novelty.

However, socio-musical context may also have had an important bearing on Neruda's reception in Manchester. After the 1848 German revolution, there was an exodus of German liberals to England. Rosemary Ashton's work on the subject explains that 'existing German communities in cities like London, Manchester, and Bradford' provided support to these refugees. In Manchester, this influx of liberal German exiles resulted in what Cyril Ehrlich describes as a 'sizeable German community with an inherent taste for music'.[61] Music permeated throughout Mancunian culture, Rachel Johnson's work describes it as being 'embedded….within industrial Manchester, as numerous leading civic figures engaged enthusiastically in musical activities within their social and private lives.'[62] Johnson outlines an appetite for musical engagement and intellectual discussion within Manchester in the mid nineteenth century, In Manchester we find a story of music education, the public music lecture, vocal classes and other participatory groups…It is clear

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[59] [Unsigned] 'Local and Provincial News,' *Manchester Times*, (2 June, 1849).

[60] [Unsigned] 'Local and Provincial News.' *Manchester Times*, (2 June, 1849).

[61] Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: a Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 62.

[62] Rachel M. Johnson, 'Musical Networks in Early Victorian Manchester', (PhD diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2020), 248.

that the newness of Manchester's society resulted in a new type of musical life'.[63] The differences between Manchester and London critical engagement with Neruda's performances may therefore be party attributable to the serious interest in music within Manchester, and it is also possible that awareness of this may have influenced Neruda's repertoire choices for her Manchester performances.

On the family's return to London, Wilma's performance at the Seventh Philharmonic Concert provoked a polarised critical response and debate in the press about the suitability of her inclusion in the series. These reviews serve as a useful insight to the obstacles and objections Neruda faced during her early career, indicating the extent to which objections to her playing related to her age and prodigy status or to her gender.

Several publications explicitly criticised Neruda's appearance at the Philharmonic. The most damning remarks came from *The Athenaeum,* which condemned her performance as a novelty act, unbefitting the prestige of the series:

> Mdlle. Wilhelmine Neruda…has been capitally trained,–and may, in time, emulate those more distinguished *girl*-violinists, the sisters Milanollo; but childish curiosity and indulgent applause–were they not destructive to their victim–are not the emotions to excite which the *Philharmonic Concerts* were founded. An artistic exhibition is thereby sunk to one of those inane shows which persons of quality not nice in their pleasures may frequent, but from which the thoughtful and the accomplished recoil. Neither music nor morality (in the high sense of the latter word) will accredit such puerile and catch-penny work.[64]

The Athenaeum's critique reveals many of the key factors at play in the negative reception of Wilma's Philharmonic performance. The explicit objections were rooted in concerns of artistic value and a commensurate bias against both child and theatre performers, with gender appearing to play a minimal role. However, a closer reading reveals more complex undertones to the commentary; the criticism of Neruda's performance as lacking artistic value, and the implied morally corrupting influence of vanity, echoes that directed at many other nineteenth-century female musicians, who regularly faced criticism for lack of artistic integrity. The implication that Neruda's career ambitions should be limited to the realm of '*girl* violinist' is illuminating, and

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[63] Rachel M. Johnson, 'Musical Networks in Early Victorian Manchester', (PhD diss., Manchester Metropolitan University, 2020), 260.

[64] [Unsigned] 'Music and the Drama,' *The Athenaeum* no. 1129 (Jun 16, 1849), 627.

significant in its reflection of the limited career opportunities available to her, as is the insinuation throughout the review that Neruda had overstepped the bounds of appropriate behaviour by transmuting the realm of theatre to the concert stage.

Several prominent musical publications concurred with *The Athenaeum's* remarks. The *Musical World* reprinted the passage, adding that 'We should be very happy, if we could, to defend the Philharmonic Society from the following strictures…but alas! with the best intentions, we are unable to select a line of defence.'[65] Similarly negative reviews appeared in other publications, including the *Standard* and *Morning Post*. *The Standard* remarked that 'the exhibition had no business whatever at a Philharmonic concert…the playing was as mediocre as possible. It is not for nursery exploits, we take it, that the subscribers pay their money', while the *Morning Post* praised Neruda's 'great delicacy and *aplomb,*' but concluded that 'Clever, however, as was the performance, it was out of place here, where nothing less than the very highest order of instrumental talent should be suffered.'[66]

The negative reactions to Neruda's appearance at the Philharmonic Concert therefore appear to raise many of the same themes and concerns, with the main objections relating to her age and artistic integrity rather than to her gender. However, the longer review published in *The Athenaeum* and the echo of these remarks in the shorter commentaries suggests that gender played a subconscious part in at least some of these criticisms.

Despite the invidious reaction from some quarters of the press, there was a fervid contingent who praised Neruda's performance and her inclusion in the Philharmonic series. *The Spectator* commended her 'unerring certainty of hand, a vigour of bow, a brilliancy of tone, and a graceful facility, which almost reminded us of De Beriot himself', while the *Morning Chronicle* actively advocated her inclusion at the Philharmonic:

> If we are to be called upon to waive our protest against the introduction of "prodigies" at these concerts, we do not know any one in whose favour we would so willingly suspend our objections as *la petite* Neruda, whose rendering of De Beriot's Concerto in D is neat and graceful, but wanting in depth of feeling and maturity of expression.[67]

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[65] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society,' *The Musical World* 24, no. 25 (Jun 23, 1849), 385.

[66] [66] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Concerts,' *Standard*, (June 14, 1849), n.p. and [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society,' *Morning Post* (June 12, 1849), 6.

[67] [Unsigned] 'Theatres and Music,' *The Spectator* 22, no. 1094 (Jun 16, 1849), 560 and [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society,' *Morning Chronicle* [London] (June 12, 1849), n.p.

Significantly, both sides of the discussion focused on the same themes, although, interestingly, the positive reviews made more overt references to Neruda's gender. One such example appeared in *Bells*, which introduced her as 'a prodigy of the musical world', continuing:

> She interested the audience by her pretty looks and modest way of presenting herself;…Mdlle Neruda's performance is not to be talked of as wonderful for a child. It was a display of genius and attainment that would have done honour to the matured powers of any artist. Her command of the bow is complete, her tone beautiful, and her execution firm, vigorous, and unerringly certain. The utmost difficulties cost her no apparent effort, and there was in her whole performance something of feminine refinement and delicacy which gave it an inexpressible charm. This little girl is already equal to Teresa Milanollo, and it is impossible even to imagine what she may become. The first violinists of the day may tremble for their laurels.[68]

Notwithstanding the positive tone and apparent willingness to take Neruda seriously as an artist, it is perhaps telling that the only player she was compared to by name in the review was another female child prodigy. This again suggested her success only within the category of 'female violinists', even if this was somewhat negated by the closing remark. The praise of her 'modesty' and 'pretty looks' are also significant, indicating an additional expectation of aesthetic appeal necessary to succeed as a female performer.

It is significant that Neruda appears to have gained largely positive responses when performing in the realm of theatre and novelty, but that this was more mixed when appearing in more formal concert settings. It is difficult to tell how many of the objections were rooted in snobbery about her theatre performances, her status as a child prodigy, her gender, or a combination of all three factors. Comparisons to the Milanollo sisters were perhaps not surprising as they were the most recent, and also a sibling pair. Any similarity was heightened by Amalie's accompaniment of Wilma in these initial performances.

Following Wilma's appearance at the Philharmonic concert and subsequent performance at Buckingham Palace, the Neruda family returned to Europe, and she did not return to Britain again until 1869, at the age of thirty, by which point she was an established solo performer. However, the English press did publish details of Neruda's continental performances throughout the 1860s. These

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[68] [Unsigned] 'Drury-Lane Theatre,' *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (17 June 1849), 8.

included Berlin (1855), Amsterdam (1868), Baden (1869), Brussels, Paris and Cologne (1869).[69] These reports often highlighted the success of her performances, and indicate that there would have been some awareness of her in the English musical consciousness.

Reviews of Norman-Neruda and Urso's solo performances: 1869-1872

Wilma Norman-Neruda: Overview

Norman-Neruda's performance career in England spanned nearly thirty years. An account of her reception and any changes in critical response during that period would make an interesting study in its own right, but such a project is beyond the scope of this thesis. As the thesis discusses women violinists up to 1872, this chapter discusses critical reactions to Norman-Neruda's performances in England between her arrival in London in 1869 and 1872, and is therefore intended to provide a snapshot of Norman-Neruda's reception around the time that women violinists were first admitted to conservatoires in England, rather than forming a comprehensive discussion of Norman-Neruda's reception over the course of her career.

Norman-Neruda's initial public solo performances in early summer 1869 gained largely positive reviews, although there was a marked sense of novelty in the language used. The *Examiner* remarked that her 'command over the violin is one of the marvels of the day. For it is not only graceful manipulation and handsome presence that will satisfy the musical critic; she fairly astounded as much as she pleased.'[70] Meanwhile, *The Musical World* described how Norman-Neruda 'astonished the audience by her execution of Moeser's fantasia on Der Freischütz'.[71] However, other reviews of these concerts appeared to consider Norman-Neruda purely as a performer, making no mention of her significance as a female violinist. The *Examiner* remarked that 'Her playing was distinguished by the same extraordinary beauty of tone and accuracy of execution, with the most wonderful command over all the difficulties of the instrument. It is long since such a genuine success has been achieved by any performer.'[72] Meanwhile, *The Musical World* praised Norman-Neruda in both her solo and chamber items, 'it will suffice to say that she did her work like a great artist and a consummate executant… The result of the concert was to make clear that Madame Neruda can play classical chamber music as well as she plays anything else.'[73]

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[69] [Unsigned] 'Amsterdam,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 13 (Mar 27, 1869), 220. (This report also included a biography of c.200 words); [Unsigned] 'Berlin,' *The Musical World* 33, no. 15 (Apr 14, 1855), 230-231.; [Unsigned] 'Cologne,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 6 (Feb 06, 1869), 86.

[70] [Unsigned] 'Concerts,' *Examiner* no. 3203 (Jun 19, 1869), 393.

[71] [Unsigned] 'Concerts Various,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 27 (Jul 03, 1869), 478.

[72] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society,' *Examiner* no. 3203 (Jun 19, 1869), 393.

[73] [Unsigned] 'Concerts Various,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 25 (Jun 19, 1869), 445-446.

Norman-Neruda's initial English appearances in 1869 were positively received, but while the discourse around her performances perhaps revealed less unease around her playing than that of her predecessors, some critical responses explicitly positioned her activities outside the norm. For example, a review of a concert in Worcester, originally published in *Berrow's Journal* and reprinted in *The Musical World,* asserted:

> Ladies are not supposed to be violinists of the first-rank, or even to be violinists at all…But, five minutes in Madame Norman-Neruda's presence is more than sufficient to convince the most sceptical, that this lady is simply mistress of the instrument, which she handles with such gracefulness and ease. She seems as if she were herself composing as she plays, so thoroughly does she indentify [sic] herself with the music, and so felicitously does she give it expression. A word must be added with reference to the lady herself–and it shall be but little more than a single word: she is a lady; she looks the lady; and her playing is that of a perfect artist, who is a perfect lady also. With her violin in her hand, as she stands gracefully erect-the very Muse of Melody.[74]

Camilla Urso: Overview

Camilla Urso was in England for relatively little time; she appears to have given a handful of concerts in 1871, and in 1872 spent March until September in London. Reviews of Urso's performances are not as plentiful as Norman-Neruda's; this may be partly due to the number of these which took place at private homes. Nevertheless, reviews of Urso's performances in 1872 form a valuable counterpoint to those of Norman-Neruda's playing, illustrating trends in critical responses to female players.

Much like Norman-Neruda, critical reviews of Urso's playing reached England well in advance of her first appearances in this country. Examples included *The Musical World,* which reported that 'The Boston papers…are full of the praises of Mdlle. Camilla Urso, a young lady violinist'.[75] At least one review was reprinted in full, which reported that she 'played divinely…It is an exquisite pleasure simply to catch the pure tones of her instrument, and to watch the harmony of motion, face and quiet artistic pose and bearing with the music; it is one perfect whole.'[76] Like

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[74] [Unsigned] 'Provincial,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 46 (Nov 13, 1869), 781.

[75] [Unsigned] 'Boston,' *The Musical World* 41, no. 11 (Mar 14, 1863), 166.

[76] J. S. Dwight, 'To the Editor of the MUSICAL WORLD,' *The Musical World* 41, no. 12 (Mar 21, 1863), 185.

Norman-Neruda, Urso's reputation clearly preceded her; *The Musical World* described her as 'a young lady violinist, new to this country, but possessing a high reputation in the United States'.[77]

Repertoire and intellect

Despite their largely positive reception, both Urso and Norman-Neruda encountered criticism from some quarters around their repertoire choices. The Mendelssohn E-minor Violin Concerto was staple repertoire for both women, but this drew particularly polarised reviews. While their detractors mainly focused on the physical requirements of the works, there also seems to have been an element of intellectual criticism. In March 1870, *The Athenaeum* remarked of Norman-Neruda's performance of the concerto at a Philharmonic Society concert, that:

> Her rendering of the first movement wanted breadth and vigour, while, in the *allegro molto vivace,* she was conquered by the executive difficulty of more than one or two passages. On the other hand, she played the *andante* with genuine expression, and brought out all its refined and graceful beauty. Saying this we judge Madame Néruda without reference to her sex. So, we believe she would have us judge.[78]

Nearly a year later, the same publication redoubled its stance, asserting that 'The Mendelssohn concertos, like that of Beethoven, are works for muscular humanity.'[79] Meanwhile, the *Pall Mall Gazette*'s critique of Norman-Neruda's March 1870 concert made strikingly similar comments to *The Athenaeum,* again finding fault with the 'vigour' and 'breadth' of playing:

> Much violin music, written to be played with masculine vigour and breadth of style, lies outside her proper repertory. Among this must be classed the first and third movements of Mendelssohn's concerto…When dealing with music demanding sentiment and delicacy–such as, for example, the slow movement in Mendelssohn's work–Madame Neruda leaves hardly anything to desire; and it would be well, therefore, if some discrimination were exercised in the choice of works for her use.[80]

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[77] [Unsigned] 'Waifs,' *The Musical World* 49, no. 21 (May 27, 1871), 324

[78] [Unsigned] 'Concerts of the Week,' *The Athenaeum* no. 2212 (Mar 19, 1870), 397.

[79] [Unsigned] 'Crystal Palace Concerts,' *The Athenaeum* no. 2257 (Jan 28, 1871), 120.

[80] Unidentified *Pall Mall Gazette* article quoted in [Unsigned] 'Our Contemporaries,' *The Musical World* 48, no. 13 (Mar 26, 1870), 210.

Aside from the similarities in language, it is significant that both writers found fault with the 'vigour' of Norman-Neruda's playing technique, while the stylistic criticism implies an intellectual as well as physical limitation in her playing, resolved in the more lyrical second movement. This makes an interesting contrast with the *Examiner*'s review of the same concert, which praised her technical skill and expression:

> She…played with such beauty of tone and delicacy of expression, combined with the most marvellous command over all the mechanism of the instrument, that she may fairly take ranks amongst the few really great performers on the violin. In the cadence, with the succession of close shakes, and passages calculated to test the ability of the most skilful performer, she was equally great, and fairly carried her audience with her. There can be no doubt that she was as admirable in classical music as in the more showy compositions of the violin school.[81]

Aside from the discussion of technique and expression, the connection made between 'classical' and 'showy' music carries an implicit message that Norman-Neruda was perceived as succeeding in 'serious' repertoire. The specific praise of tone is also notable, when compared to the criticism regarding lack of power which featured in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Athenaeum* reviews.

Urso's playing of the Mendelssohn concerto provoked remarkably similar critical discourse in its division over her tone and power. One of Urso's first performances in London, playing the first movement of the Mendelssohn concerto at a concert at a private house, gained only a fleeting mention in The Musical World's review of the concert, where she was described as 'a young and clever violinist, who has recently arrived from America', who played the work 'in excellent style'.[82]

This was followed by a performance of the full concerto at an afternoon Crystal Palace concert. *The Athenaeum* remarked of the performance that 'whilst we may award to her the credit of being an expert executant, her tone and power are open to the same objections as those of other lady-fiddlers–that they are not sufficient to contend with the *tutti* of a large orchestra.'[83] In contrast, *The Monthly Musical Record* disagreed, stating 'Her tone is powerful, her intonation very

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[81] [Unsigned] 'St James's Hall,' *Examiner* no. 3242 (Mar 19, 1870), 184.

[82] [Unsigned] 'Concerts Various,' *The Musical World* 49, no. 19 (May 13, 1871), 290

[83] [Unsigned] 'Musical Gossip.' *The Athenaeum* no. 2303 (Dec 16, 1871), 802.

accurate, and her bowing excellent; yet, to tell the truth, we missed somewhat of the sympathetic charm of style which some of our great violinists impart to their performance.'[84]

A year later, in May 1872, *The Musical Standard* reported on Urso's performance of the Mendelssohn at a Philharmonic Society concert and praised her 'tone, style, and thorough command over her instrument', asserting that 'In power alone is the lady inferior to her masculine compeers.'[85] Meanwhile, *The Musical Times* commented that 'The slow movement, especially, was rendered with a truth of expression which charmed every hearer; but the last movement was taken too fast, and the one became thin in the effort to keep up the speed at which it was commenced.'[86]

The technical demands of the Mendelssohn concerto are very different to that of the showpieces discussed earlier. As exemplified in the opening to the work, rather than working through a demonstration of varying impressive techniques, the challenges of the Mendelssohn lie in aspects such as the accurate pitching of high melodic material, accuracy in rapid triplet figures and in the tuning of octave double stops, while the emphasis on melodic, rather than technical material poses additional interpretative challenges to the player.

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[84] [Unsigned] 'Crystal Palace.' *The Monthly Musical Record* 2, (01, 1872), 13.

[85] [Unsigned] 'The Philharmonic Society,' *Musical Standard* 2, no. 405 (May 04, 1872), 248.

[86] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society.' *Musical Times and Singing Class Circular, 1844-1903* 15, no. 352 (06, 1872), 498.

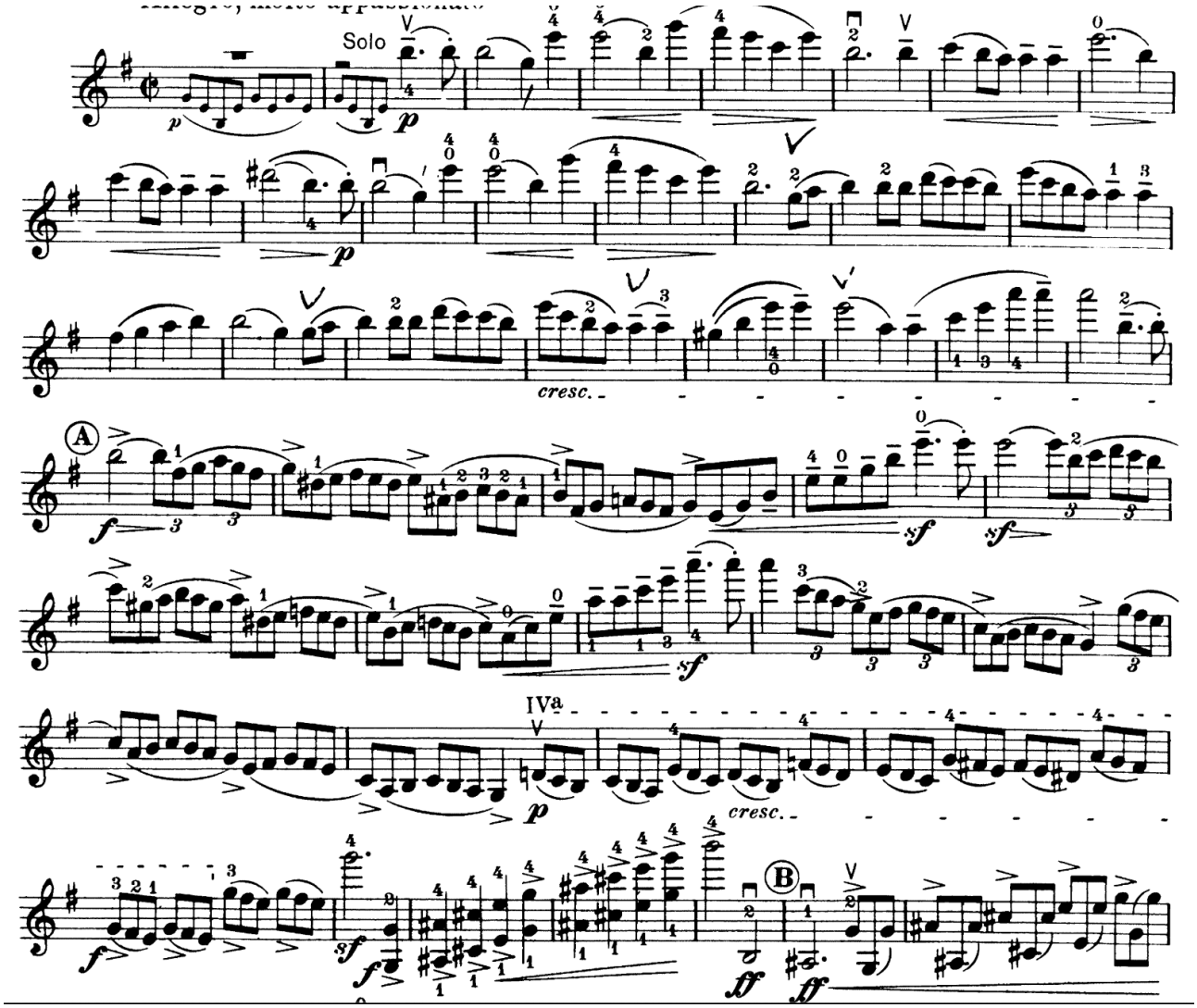

Fig. 5.3: Mendelssohn, Violin Concerto Op.64, first movement

The theme of power was again evident in critical responses to Norman-Neruda's playing of the Beethoven concerto. A review from a performance in May 1871, at the Philharmonic concerts described the work as being 'delicately, but not powerfully, handled by Madame Norman-Neruda.'[87] The *Musical Standard*'s review reported that 'this lady's broad style, exquisite taste, and fine tone are simply perfect. If we say, that with the exception of physical power in double stops, the lady is as great as Joachim, we have measured her by the highest standard possible.'[88]

However, not all of the discussion around gender and physicality was negative; *The Manchester Guardian* remarked that 'as a lady, her smaller fingers give her an advantage over her male competitors which no amount of labour on their part can possibly overcome.'[89] While her 'power' might have been criticised, 'grace' and 'delicacy' were recurring themes in many reviews, and appear to have been seen almost as a natural antithesis to this, with one review explicitly stating that her 'exquisite finish of style and delicacy of phrasing more than compensates for the comparative thinness of her tone.' In 1871, the *Musical Standard* praised Norman-Neruda's 'delicacy and finish which invariably distinguish her readings'.[90] Similarly, in December 1872, *The Musical World* referred to 'the grace and delicacy of her execution being a theme of general comment'.[91]

Gendered repertories

The responses of a number of reviews reveal a definite divide in repertoire or styles of music thought to be appropriate to each gender. Norman-Neruda's playing of Spohr's *Dramatic Concerto* forms a particularly good example. The *Manchester Guardian* remarked that:

> We think that we have heard her in music which suits her special qualities better than the concerto by Spohr. We must except the beautiful slow movement, however, from this remark, the exquisitely flowing melody of which is rendered with the utmost tenderness by Madame Neruda. The quasi-recitative character of some other portions of the concerto,–from which, probably, it takes its name,–seems to require the hand of a male artist to give it the necessary breadth and fulness.[92]

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[87] [Unsigned] 'Concerts,' *The Athenaeum* no. 2274 (May 27, 1871), 664.

[88] [Unsigned] 'Reports,' *Musical Standard* 1, no. 356 (May 27, 1871), 43.

[89] [Unsigned] 'Mr. C. Halle's Grand Concerts: Programme,' *The Manchester Guardian* (Dec 15, 1871), 2

[90] [Unsigned] 'The Monday Popular Concerts,' *Musical Standard* 1, no. 381 (Nov 18, 1871), 375-376.

[91] [Unsigned] 'Monday Popular Concerts,' *The Musical World* 50, no. 52 (Dec 28, 1872), 834.

[92] [Unsigned] 'Mr. C. Halle's Concerts,' *The Manchester Guardian*, Jan 20, 1871.

Similarly, the *Musical* Standard remarked that it was 'excellently given, but somehow it hardly seemed quite to suit the style of the fair violinist.'[93] Underpinning these reviews was a subtext that in addition to physical requirements that were perceived to be lacking, there was also an interpretive element which female players could not successfully realise. A more explicit discussion of this appeared in *The Manchester Guardian* in 1872:

> We do not think that she enters into the spirit of Bach's compositions; nay, we almost doubt whether it does not require a masculine mind to do so fully…we cannot recall the name of any lady who as yet has shone as an exponent of the works of this grand old master, and certainly the concerto for two violins was not the most effective piece in which Madame Norman-Neruda appeared last night; while in the co-operation of Herr Strauss she certainly had the assistance of a gentleman who has fully mastered the specialty of Bach's severe style, to which he did the fullest justice.[94]

In critical reactions to large scale works, Norman-Neruda appears to have been allowed success in beauty and interpretation, but with her tonal power being criticised. It is difficult to know whether this was truly representative of Norman-Neruda's playing, or whether this is indicative of gendered ideas around the nature and scope of female performance. However, criticisms of musicians for their lack of intellectual grasp of the music they played were not reserved solely for women performers. In 1869, *The Musical Times* remarked that 'M. Vieuxtemps' interpretation of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, scarcely realised the intellectual beauties of the work to the fullest extent.'[95]

Amidst women's changing social and musical roles, broader sociopolitical discussions concerning the nature of male and female also spilled into musical journals. In 1869, *The Musical World,* discussing a critique of Mill's *The Subjection of Women* published in the *Spectator,* argued:

> If there be no difference between man and woman, no radical and incurable disproportion of originating power, why has woman produced no Arnold, no Beethoven? …although in the executive department of the art we have an Arabella

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[93] [Unsigned] 'Sacred Harmonic Society,' *Musical Standard* 14, no. 339 (Jan 28, 1871), 42.

[94] [Unsigned] 'Mr. C. Halle's Grand Concerts: Programme,' *The Manchester Guardian (*Dec 27, 1872), 4.

[95] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Society,' *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 14, no. 317 (1869), 142.

> Goddard and a Norman-Neruda, as well as a Hallé and a Vieuxtemps, it must be admitted that in creative power women cannot rank beside the sterner sex.[96]

Norman-Neruda and her contemporaries were therefore allowed to succeed as *executants*, but this was considered distinct from the *creative* realm of composition. Although much of the critical reaction to Norman-Neruda's playing was positive, this perspective from *The Musical World* reveals much about the underlying ideologies of reviewers.

Meanwhile, ideas about distinct qualities of each sex provoked broader sociopolitical discussions, including around women's changing social and musical roles. Fanny Raymond Ritter's *Woman as a Musician* portrayed women's art as being distinct in nature from men's, arguing that 'who that has heard the sisters Milanollo, and Madame Neruda there, or Camilla Urso in America, will deny that a woman's violin-playing possesses a tender, delicate, sympathetic charm, as pleasing in its way as the more varied and powerful stroke of a man?[97]

Interviews in articles published in fashionable ladies' magazines later in the century give some useful insights into how Norman-Neruda presented herself. In an 1894 interview with *Cassell's Family Magazine*, the interviewer described her as having the 'gift' of violin playing 'bestowed upon her by Queen Nature', while Neruda's own reference to, 'Abandoning one's self to the devotional study of one's art', positioned violin playing as a sort of sacred study, referring to thereby freeing it from any occult associations and instead aligning it with the feminine moral values of purity and piety.[98] The extent to which Norman-Neruda appears to have balanced social expectations against her performing career is demonstrated in the interview's praise of her 'extraordinary charm of her artistic abilities, as well as her amiability and cordiality as a hostess and friend.[99]

Grace and elegance

Numerous reviews of Urso's playing and from Norman-Neruda's first few years in England highlight the extent to which aesthetics were still a hugely important factor in the reception of female players. In particular, a number of reviews placed specific emphasis on the grace and elegance of the player, either praising Urso and Norman-Neruda's playing in relation to these aspects, or reassuring

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[96] E. Tourjee, 'Waifs,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 35 (Aug 28, 1869), 612.

[97] Fanny Raymond Ritter, *Woman as a musician: An art-historical survey* (London: W. Reeves, 1877), 11.

[98] Von Zedlitz, 'A Chat with Lady Hallé,' 781.

[99] Ibid., 784.

the reader that the aesthetics of the performance were not compromised. A typical example from the *Examiner* in May 1869 reads:

> There are few instruments–with the special exception of the harp–that allow of the exhibition of grace in manipulation; above all, perhaps, the most difficult to manage and least susceptible of elegant handling is the violin even in the hands of a Vieuxtemps; in those of a lady we should have feared her doing violence to our feelings, until we heard this accomplished artiste. She is evidently mistress of all the resources of her weapon, the bow. We find no lack of power, no want of softness; accurate in intonation, facile in execution, rich in volume, Madame Neruda's masterly performance placed her at once in the position of having triumphantly passed a trying ordeal, and achieved an emphatic success.[100]

A *Musical World* review of the same date was markedly similar in tone, commenting:

> Her use of the bow arm is so easy and graceful that we are compelled to waive the not quite unnatural objection to see such an instrument as the fiddle in the delicate hands of a lady. Madame Neruda possesses, moreover, a vigour which, while it has nothing obtrusive, is rather masculine than feminine.[101]

The review from the *Examiner* seems to imply that the quality of Norman-Neruda's playing outweighed any aesthetic objections that might be made. In light of comments made by other objections, it is interesting that the writer specifically found no fault with Norman-Neruda's 'power' as a player. While these reviews contained positive comments about her tone and technique, they included little commentary on musical or interpretative decisions. It is significant that perceived 'masculine' elements of Norman-Neruda's playing were praised, with explicit reference to 'vigour'.

Similar comments around grace and aesthetics appeared in critical responses to Urso's playing, and this has been highlighted in much of the literature on her. Susan Kagan's 1977 work observes 'A consistent feature of Camilla Urso's concert reviews were references to her femininity and the "feminine" characteristics of her playing style.'[102] Selleck's more recent work concurs, 'A

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[100] [Untitled] 'Philharmonic Concerts,' *Examiner* no. 3199 (May 22, 1869), 329.

[101] [Unsigned] 'Philharmonic Concerts,' *The Musical World* 47, no. 21 (May 22, 1869), 369.

[102] Susan Kagan, 'Camilla Urso: A Nineteenth-Century Violinist's View,' *Signs* 2, no. 3 (1977), 730.

striking characteristic of Urso's local and international reviews is the emphasis on physical appearance and feminine qualities'; Selleck describes this as being 'typical of reviews of female performers at the time'.[103]

Certainly, aspects of this are apparent on reading Urso's English reviews from the early 1870s. For example, *The Orchestra* remarked in April 1872 that 'She interpreted Mozart's D major concerto for violin and orchestra with exceeding grace, refinement and intelligence'.[104] An 1872 review of a concert where Urso played portions of Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata and Ernst's *Elegie* read:

> Her playing is remarkable for purity of intonation and facility of execution; her shake, as is common with lady violinists, is rapid and perfect. In the "Elegie" her tone was fine and pure, but for such a passionate pathetic piece her reading was somewhat wanting in depth of expression and emotional phrazing.[105]

It is telling that even within such a short extract, the notion of 'purity' appears twice. Meanwhile, while we might expect Urso to succeed in the (perhaps more likely to be perceived as female) realm of expression, the criticism in relation to emotional or interpretive depth could be read as shorthand for a lack of requisite intellect.

Status within the London musical world

Reviews at the end of 1871 and the start of 1872 suggest that by this point, Norman-Neruda was considered something of a fixture on the London concert scene, and accepted as a serious artist. In December 1871, *The Manchester Guardian* described her as 'an institution, not only in this city, but wherever in England people care to hear classical music played with consummate artistic ability'.[106] A throwaway remark in the *Musical Standard* in the same month noted that the director of the Monday Popular Concerts 'must introduce novelties if he wish his success to be long lasting.' The implication is that Norman-Neruda, as a regular performer in the series, was not considered a 'novelty', despite her sex.

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[103] Joanna Selleck, 'Camilla Urso: A Visiting Virtuoso Brings Music to The People,' in *Music Research. New directions for a new century*, ed. Michael Ewans, Rosalind Halton and John A. Phillips (Amersham: Cambridge Scholar's Press, 2004), 96.

[104] [Unsigned] 'Concerts.' *The Orchestra* 18, no. 447 (Apr 19, 1872), 35.

[105] [Unsigned] 'M. Ganz's Classical Concert,' *Musical Standard* 2, no. 403 (Apr 20, 1872), 211.

[106] [Unsigned] 'Mr. C. Halle's Grand Concerts: Programme.' *The Manchester Guardian* (Dec 15, 1871), 2

1872 sparked a change in Norman-Neruda's reception by English critics. Where in 1869-71 her appearances had generally resulted in fairly lengthy reviews, at the start of 1872, reviews became noticeably shorter in length and detail. Examples included *The Musical World,* which stated 'Other features of this concert were Mozart's sonata in B flat for piano and violin; which, composed for a lady (Mdlle. Strinasacchi), was appropriately played by Madame Neruda and Madame Goddard…'[107] and *The Musical Standard,* 'The adagio of Spohr once more brought forwards Mdme. Norman-Neruda, whose fine phrasing and mellowness of tone on the fourth string evoked general applause…'[108] This sort of reduction in critical engagement appears to have been fairly commensurate with reviews of Norman-Neruda's male contemporaries; once they were established on the British musical scene, reviews tended to be more cursory.

In contrast, Urso does not seem to have established herself in British concert life in the same way. This may be partly due to the nature of her career, which had a stronger emphasis on touring, whereas Norman-Neruda settled in London. After her performances in 1872, Urso did not return to London, despite making visits to Dublin and Paris.

Norman-Neruda was favourably compared with the leading male players of the day, particularly Joseph Joachim. Such parallels were exemplified by *The Strad* in 1894, 'What Joachim is to the sterner sex as a violinist, just the same is Lady Halle to the gentler. These two names will be handed down to posterity as belonging to two of the very greatest artists that the world has ever seen.'[109] Comparisons were also drawn to other male contemporaries, with *The Musical Times* remarking in 1887 that Norman-Neruda was 'doing something to atone for the gap caused by the absence this season of Mr. Sarasate.' [110] Meanwhile, in 1893, *The Sewanee Review* commented that her 'profound classical style compares quite favourably with that of Wilhelmj.'[111] These comparisons mark a shift in critical response; prior to Norman-Neruda, much of the discourse around women violinists drew comparisons between female players, rather than discussing them alongside their male counterparts. However, reviews of Norman-Neruda's performances, especially those as a mature artist, drew comparisons to male players in a way that had been lacking in discussions of female players previously, indicating a more genuine critical consideration of her performances. The same was not true of Urso, who did not seem to draw comparisons to male contemporaries in the

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[107] [Unsigned] 'Monday Popular Concerts,' *The Musical World* 50, no. 5 (Feb 03, 1872), 70.

[108] [Unsigned] 'The Monday Popular Concerts,' *Musical Standard* 2, no. 400 (Mar 30, 1872), 167.

[109] ['Bass Viol'] 'Wilhelmine Maria Franziska Neruda (Lady Halle),' *The Strad,* 5. 52 (August 1894), 107.

[110] [Unsigned] 'Madame Néruda's Orchestral Concerts,' *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 28.532 (1887), 344.

[111] T.L. Krebs, 'Women as Musicians,' *The Sewanee Review*, 2.1 (1893), 81.

same way. The reason for this is not clear, but may have been tied up with the socio-musical circles that she and Norman-Neruda moved in. While Urso may have been regarded as a 'guest artist', Norman-Neruda appears to have been very much established in a London concert scene which included many eminent performers of the day, and activities such as deputising for Joachim may have led more naturally to parallels being drawn between the two.

Comparisons between Norman-Neruda and Urso seem to have been surprisingly rare, bearing in mind that they were in London at around the same time, and considering the predisposition of the musical press to draw comparisons between these women and their predecessors, such as the Milanollos. The only example I have found dates from 1872:

> The scheme of the third Philharmonic Concert last Monday… Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, executed by Madame Camilla Urso, who has more vigour than Madame Norman-Neruda, but not so much finish. [112]

Although Norman-Neruda and Urso seem to have been in London at the same time, it is not clear whether they knew each other, and they did not appear together in concert. This may have been a conscious decision, in order to avoid the semblance of a novelty performance – and to maintain their careers as artists in their own right rather than risking pigeonholing – or may have purely been the result of concert scheduling or their paths not crossing.

Legacy and impact

Musical politics

Despite her status as a pioneer in the realm of female violinists, Norman-Neruda appears to have been reluctant to get involved in debates concerning women playing the instrument. The closest that she came to stating an opinion can be found in an 1890 interview, published in *The Woman's World,* which asserted 'although in her sphere a pioneer of "the woman movement," she is not one of its whole-hearted supporters, and with an amusing vigour she disclaims any desire for a vote.'[113] Norman-Neruda rarely spoke about the politics surrounding her status as a woman violinist. This interview formed a notable exception, in which she explained:

> When I first came to London…I was surprised to find that it was thought almost improper, certainly unladylike, for a woman to play on the violin. In Germany the thing

[112] [Unsigned] 'Concerts,' *The Athenaeum* no. 2323 (May 04, 1872), 568.

[113] Frederick Dolman, 'Lady Hallé at Home,' *The Woman's World* 3 (1890), 174.

> was quite common and excited no comment. I could not understand–it seemed so absurd–why people thought so differently here….I think of my first concert and the reproachful curiosity with which the people at first regarded my playing. For a long time at every fresh town I played I could not help noticing the strange, curious looks of many in the audience.[114]

The majority of Norman-Neruda's performances before her adult appearance in England in 1869 had been in German-speaking Europe and Scandinavia, and her comments therefore suggest that this relaxed attitude towards female playing perhaps extended beyond Germany in continental Europe. Interestingly, Norman-Neruda also made reference to male violinists facing issues, explaining that 'Vieuxtemps, Grieg, and others used to say that they could never carry their instruments [in public]'.[115]

In an interview with *The Strand* in 1895, instead of answering questions herself, Norman-Neruda decreed 'I think I will let my husband speak for me', and Charles Hallé obligingly recounted her early years. This apparent demurral to her husband suggests Norman-Neruda as a canny political and social navigator, who trod a careful balance between her career as a successful female violinist, whilst conforming to the roles socially expected of her and deferring to her husband. If this mirrored her behaviour off the concert stage, this may in some part explain her success; her demeanour and apparent lack of interest in challenging the status quo may have made her more acceptable to her male colleagues than more outspoken female players.

Urso was a vocal proponent of the violin as an instrument for women. Susan Kagan has described her as 'an outspoken advocate of professional and economic equality for women as orchestral musicians'.[116] Meanwhile, Freia Hoffmann has explained:

> In contrast to most of her violin-playing colleagues, Camilla Urso herself commented on the gender issue … The question of orchestral access arose not least because of the boom that Camilla Urso herself had triggered and which showed itself in a rapidly growing number of violin students at the conservatories in Boston and New York.[117]

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[114] Ibid., 171.

[115] Ibid., 172. The situation around gender politics and music for male players was rather complex and also bound up with issues of class; a full discussion is beyond this thesis, but I suspect Norman-Neruda's point here is that it would have been thought 'unmanly' to be seen carrying a violin publicly.

[116] Susan Kagan, 'Urso, Camilla,' *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online,* accessed 30 September 2018. https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46118.

[117] Hoffmann, 'Urso, Camilla'.

In 1893, Urso's reading of her article 'professional and economic equality for women musicians as orchestra members' at the 'Woman's Musical Congress' in Chicago, argued for 'professional and economic equality for women musicians as orchestra members'.[118] In 1898, Urso wrote an article published in the *Musical Courier,* again advocating for women's inclusion in symphony orchestra, and citing her enjoyment of a concert by the Women's String Orchestra, of which she was president.[119] Highlighting 'the lightness and grace of the violin' as an advantage in its adoption by women musicians, she argued 'the violin is perfectly within the ability of women and "en rapport" to their tastes…Women as a rule play in better tune than men. They play with greater expression, certainly, than the average orchestral musician.'[120]

Retirement

Having been widowed in 1895, Norman-Neruda announced in 1900 that she intended to retire to Berlin, and both press commentary at the time and obituaries in 1911 suggest that there may have been an element of financial motivation for this. In 1900, *The Monthly Musical Record* commented that 'The announcement that Lady Hallé intends to settle in Berlin and devote herself to teaching has somewhat startled many of her admirers, who supposed that her brilliant career had resulted in securing her an ample fortune.' Similarly, *The Musical Standard's* obituary asserted that 'She was prevented by financial reasons from ever retiring from her profession.'[121]

Like Norman-Neruda, Urso was also financially prevented from retiring. Christine Ammer's work explains 'Camilla Urso herself never managed to amass enough money to retire. Indeed, during the last years of her life she occasionally appeared in vaudeville shows, and she was harshly criticized for stooping so low.'[122] Jennifer Schiller also notes that 'At this time she seems to have been increasingly occupied with and interested in her teaching as well.'[123] Although the full circumstances are not entirely clear, the fact that both Urso and Norman-Neruda were financially

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[118] Kagan, 'Camilla Urso: A Nineteenth-Century Violinist's View', 730. The original manuscript is unpublished, but was in Kagan's possession at the time the article in *Signs* was published.

[119] *Musical Courier* 36, no. 9 (1898): 7, quoted in Kagan, 'Camilla Urso: A Nineteenth-Century Violinist's View', 731.

[120] Ibid., 733.

[121] [Unsigned] 'Lady Hallé,' *Musical Standard* 35, no. 904 (Apr 29, 1911), 19.

[122] Christine Ammer, *Unsung: A history of women in American music,* 2nd ed., (Portland: Amadeus, 2001), 40. Ammer cites a couple of contemporary sources as evidence in her discussion.

[123] Schiller, 'Camilla Urso' 97.

prevented from retirement suggests a level of financial precarity that may well have been off-putting to women who might otherwise have considered a performing career.

Impact on socio-musical culture

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, numerous articles appeared which discussed the phenomenon of women violinists. Many of these included information about female players earlier in the century (sometimes also citing dubious historical examples) and discussed objections to women playing the violin. The discussion of Norman-Neruda in these articles contextualises her as part of a line of female violinists, and helps to track the progress of the violin as an instrument for women before Norman-Neruda's time. Many of the articles refer explicitly to objections to female violinists, providing a snapshot of attitudes towards female violinists more generally.

A typical example was F.G. Edwards two-part series 'Lady Violinists', published in *The Musical Times* in 1906, which discussed some of the objections to women playing the violin, and listed some of the best known female violinists from the nineteenth century, including Plunket, Mara, Gerbini, Tremean, and the Milanollos.[124] The impact and significance of Norman-Neruda's career is also demonstrated by the number of these articles which attribute her a role in the adoption of the violin by women musicians. One such example appeared in Percy Scholes' *Mirror of Music*:

> It seems to have been Wilhelmine Neruda who, by her example, made the instrument a fashionable instrument with her sex. For half-a-century the Royal Academy of Music had no female student of the violin. In 1872 it had, at last, one such student. Thirty-four years later (see *MT* Dec. 1906) it had seventy-two, whilst the Royal College of Music had eighty-eight and the Guildhall School of Music no less than two hundred and thirty.[125]

In modern literature, Norman-Neruda has been highlighted as an important role model for women musicians at the end of the century. Paula Gillett writes:

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[124] Edwards, F. G. 'Lady Violinists.' *The Musical Times* 47, no. 764 (1906): 662-68 and Edwards, F. G. 'Lady Violinists (Concluded).' *The Musical Times* 47, no. 765 (1906): 735-40.

[125] Percy A. Scholes, *The Mirror of Music, 1844-1944 : a Century of Musical Life in Britain as Reflected in the Pages of the Musical Times* (London: Novello, 1947), 343.

> Marie Hall, whose teachers were men, benefited from the examples of earlier performers whose brilliance had made obsolete the long prejudice against women violinists–first, of course, Wilma Norman-Neruda…[126]

Although Camilla Urso does not seem to have had the same level of impact in England, Adrienne Fried Block and Nancy Steward attribute Urso with being particularly influential for American musicians, 'thanks primarily to the influence of Camilla Urso, the violin became not only an accepted but even a preferred instrument for female musicians.'[127] Meanwhile, Christine Ammer takes a view of Urso's impact in the United States not dissimilar to Gillett's of Norman-Neruda in England, writing, 'Inspiring as Urso's example may have been to American girls of the 1870s, it is doubtful that a single woman virtuoso–even if she was Camilla Urso–could have given rise to a whole wave of girl violinists.'.[128] Schiller remarks 'the careers of many later, successful female violin soloists were influenced by the pioneering example of Urso', citing the example of Maud Powell, who 'acknowledged readily' [Urso's] influence.[129]

Part of the reason that Urso's impact seems to have been so significant in the United States may be explained that, as Jennifer Schiller notes, 'there existed much more of a precedent for female violin soloists in Europe than in the United States.'[130] Schiller sees Urso's influence in the United States as extending beyond the realm of women violinists, writing, 'one can also argue that her performances played a role in helping to raise the public's awareness of and exposure to classical music, and even, as she put it, "elevate" their taste.'[131] Schiller explains that 'it was somewhat rare to hear a concert comprised only of "pure" classical music of a sophisticated level, without the inclusion of some more popular repertoire designed to cater to the audience's taste,' especially in more rural regions, but that Urso deliberately cultivated entirely classical programmes.[132]

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[126] Gillett, *Musical Women in England*, 66-67.

[127] Adrienne Fried Block and Nancy Steward. 'Women in American Music, 1800-1918,' in *Women & Music: A History,* 2nd ed, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 204.

[128] Ammer, *Unsung,* 40.

[129] Schiller, 'Camilla Urso', 7.

[130] Ibid,. 69.

[131] Ibid., 78.

[132] Ibid., 79.

Conclusions

The reviews and discussion here relate to only a small part of Norman-Neruda and Urso's careers, providing a snapshot of critical reactions to female violinists in the years immediately preceding the first admittance of women to study the violin at a UK conservatoire.

In their solo playing, both Norman-Neruda and Urso gained positive reviews, but with a division in critical response. There was genuine engagement with their playing, but this was tempered by discussions of aspects of their playing either perceived to be feminine in nature, or lacking the necessary 'masculine' traits needed in order to fully realise the works. Discussions of tone and power were a particular feature of the critical discussion, and while a review of one concert might praise these aspects of their playing, another review of the same concert might specifically criticise this aspect. It is noticeable that in large-scale works such as the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, both players attracted more positive comments about their playing of the less technically demanding slower, more lyrical movements, with most of the fault found with the faster or more technically challenging outer movements. It is also noticeable that particular publications seem to have pushed this agenda; for example, *The Athenaeum* made repeated comments about female players' lack of power or interpretative understanding. There therefore seems to have been an agenda for some critics, whether conscious or not, which ties into broader socio-musical discussions around the scope and nature of women's role in the musical sphere.

As valuable as an interrogation of their solo reception is, Norman-Neruda and Urso's chamber music activities arguably formed a more significant role when considering the changing attitudes towards women violinists, and it is important to consider what enabled these women to be in a position where they could partake in public ensemble playing, especially in a leading role. I suggest that the early musical education of both artists was significant in this respect, as for both Norman-Neruda and Urso, quartet and chamber playing was normalised in their formative years. Both women had access to opportunities that were not available more generally to women musicians, which enabled them to incorporate chamber music as part of their careers. Norman-Neruda benefitted from the advantage of growing up in a large musical family which functioned as a ready-made chamber training ensemble. Meanwhile, Urso, as a rare female student of the violin at the Paris Conservatoire, gained access to ensemble training that was otherwise denied to women. By the mid-1850s, women were increasingly taking part in chamber music as pianists, and combined with Norman-Neruda and Urso's existing quartet experience, it seems likely that this created a climate in which quartet performances seemed a logical addition to their concerts.

Urso and Norman-Neruda's performances need to be considered in the context of broader mid-late nineteenth-century socio-musical culture. Changing socio-politics in the nineteenth-century musical world created new opportunities for women violinists in the realm of

chamber music. Christina Bashford's work on the nineteenth-century string quartet notes that 'at some concerts, particularly in the second half of the century, "star" violinists were habitually slotted above three local players'.[133] These visitors were typically virtuosi who visited England while touring Europe, and Urso (and to some extent, Norman-Neruda) fits this model. Simultaneously, Tully Potter suggests that a changing musical dynamic, shifting from the first violin driven style of the earlier part of the century to a more even distribution of musical roles, was a factor in 'the players in professional quartets gradually [becoming] more equal.'[134] This is particularly significant for female players, as an increasing democratisation within chamber music may well have created a musical environment more conducive to their participation, and consequently increased the opportunities available to them.

Although neither Norman-Neruda nor Urso seems to have explicitly encountered criticism for *leading* string quartets, both experienced issues in their reception which related to the broader issues encountered by women violinists. For Norman-Neruda, there appears to have been an initial element of novelty and sexualisation, which she seems to have overcome. Despite the precedent set by Norman-Neruda, Urso encountered more criticism for her 'feminine style' and perceived lack of tone. However, the broadly positive critical reactions to both players perhaps indicates that the London press and audiences may have been slightly more open-minded towards women in positions of musical authority in the nineteenth century than we might expect. In addition to the critical and public reactions, the inclusion of female players such as Norman-Neruda and Urso in chamber music, especially in first violin roles, suggests a growing acceptance of female players by their male contemporaries.

Some research has been undertaken on the careers of women violinists during the nineteenth century, but much of this focuses on their careers as soloists, with little space given to discussing the scope or significance of their work as chamber musicians. Norman-Neruda and Urso were both hugely influential in making the violin more acceptable for female players. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, following the admittance of women violinists to conservatoires, a number of all-female string quartets appeared in London, a precursor to their gradual admittance to the professional orchestral world during the course of the twentieth century. There is still much to be explored in the lives and careers of women string players as ensemble participants in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; gaining a better understanding of the reception of earlier performances by figures such as Norman-Neruda and

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[133] Christina Bashford, 'The String Quartet and Society', in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, ed. by Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9-10.

[134] Tully Potter, 'From Chamber to Concert Hall', in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, ed. by Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

Urso can inform and help to shape the critical-historical narrative of emerging female roles within ensemble performance.

Conclusion

The opening chapters of this thesis explored contextual issues which underpinned and informed the reception of women violinists during the period 1770–1872. While much of the existing literature on women and the violin attributes the social prohibition of female violin playing predominantly to aesthetic issues and the homoerotic connotations of the instrument's ascribed female gender, I suggest that notions of virtuosity and deeply ingrained ideas about socially acceptable modes of music-making were also a significant contributing factor. Chapter one explored a variety of nineteenth-century sources relating to female behaviour, education and etiquette, which emphasised the importance of conforming to the socially expected modes of female performance. Conventions around scope, scale, and the setting of women's music-making dictated the nature of female performance, with limits placed on the level of playing to be displayed; becoming too accomplished was strongly discouraged.

The gendered division of instruments reflected social hierarchies, with women limited to seated, accompanying instruments, where their main purpose was decorative. For a performer to play an instrument outside those allotted to their sex disrupted social conventions, and performance on the violin therefore transgressed these norms. Paula Gillett dedicates an entire chapter – 'Woman and the Devil's Instrument' – of *Musical Women in England* to exploring her argument that the violin's occult links contributed towards what she frames as a 'ban' on female violin playing.[1] While Gillett makes a compelling case for these links, she does not provide any specific nineteenth-century examples explicitly advising against the violin as an instrument for women on these grounds, or any instances of critical language which indicate an objection based on occult links. My own research corroborates this; it is difficult to find any examples of nineteenth-century discourse which explicitly discuss the violin's occult links in relation to women playing the instrument. However, it is evident that the long association between the supernatural and the violin was still very much present in the nineteenth-century consciousness due to the prevalence of the trope across the arts throughout the course of the century. This connection was further reinforced by the careers of Paganini and Tartini, who both embraced the trope through compositions and performances. Meanwhile, the combination of notions of female virtue and the perceived ability of the occult violin to corrupt this are also likely to have been contributing factors. Much of the informal prohibition on women playing the violin was entwined with unspoken codes of female conduct. Despite the lack of explicit discussion of the violin's occult links in

[1] Paula Gillett, *Musical Women in England, 1870-1914: "Encroaching on All Man's Privileges"* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2000).

relation to women playing the instrument during the nineteenth century, the prevalence of the occult violin trope during the period means that the links would have been well-established in the nineteenth-century imagination. This association may well have constituted one of the intrinsic and unspoken objections to women playing the violin, and may have contributed to the evident sense of unease present in much of the contemporary discourse around female violinists.

All six of the violinists considered in the case studies were foreigners in England. This is not coincidental; being foreign was not only a fashionable advantage in nineteenth-century English musical circles, but it also allowed these women to operate slightly outside of the English conventions concerning female behaviour. While it might not have been considered appropriate for English women to pursue careers as professional violinists, there may have been less concern around the activities of female players from abroad.

Foreign musicians were prevalent in nineteenth-century London; David Golby describes 'a dominant foreign element' in nineteenth-century British musical culture.[2] This resulted in a division between English musicians and their foreign counterparts; Deborah Rohr's work explains, 'Patrons often seem to have preferred hiring foreign musicians, especially for private concerts… foreign musicians were sometimes more highly trained and skilled than their British counterparts.'[3] Foreign musicians were seen as being both better trained and more 'exotic' than their English counterparts.[4] This foreign dominance in part explains why the female violinists who did emerge in the period before 1870 were foreigners rather than native players.

Issues around social structure and the status of musicians may also have been a contributing factor. David Golby describes the British 'picture of low status, often poorly educated native musicians, even relatively eminent figures, contrasted with the fortunes of their 'exotic' foreign colleagues.'[5] Rohr makes a similar point, which is particularly pertinent to female musicians:

> Foreign musicians…[had] an apparent cosmopolitanism, sometimes a familiarity with several languages, and ingratiating manners developed in the service of European royal and noble patrons. In contrast, the relatively low social origins of English musicians were more difficult to disguise in their own country and language.[6]

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[2] David J. Golby, *Instrumental Teaching in Nineteenth-century Britain. Music in Nineteenth-century Britain,* Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004, 104.

[3] Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians,* 14.

[4] Golby, *Instrumental Teaching in Nineteenth-century Britain,* 4.

[5] Ibid., 18.

[6] Rohr, *The Careers of British Musicians,* 49-50.

This is particularly significant for female players, as being foreign meant that these players did not have to navigate the additional complexities of the social system in the same way that native players did. Rohr also outlines a sense of competition between native and foreign musicians for patronage and opportunities. When competing for these, English female players would presumably have been at the bottom of the pecking order, thanks to being both female and native.

That the female violinists who performed in England were foreign is perhaps not surprising in the context of early-mid nineteenth-century concert life and the dominance of foreign musicians within the London musical circuit. Competition between British and foreign musicians was high, and the preference for foreign players may have been a factor in the lack of native female violinists, as this would have posed an additional challenge to the socio-musical barriers surrounding women's violin playing.

The six women case studies discussed in this thesis certainly buck the trend of a 'prohibition' on women playing the violin in England, but it is significant that they were foreign players, and that they found exposure as child or young soloists. It is therefore worth evaluating the extent to which their 'otherness' was key to their acceptance and status. Cyril Ehrlich's work argues that 'it was the instrumentalists, Italian and German, and a few French, who tended to stay, and their dominating positions were usually the result of superior training and musicianship, not mere fashion.'[7] The six women discussed in this thesis certainly fit this model, hailing from Italy, Franc and Germany. Ehrlich highlights Haweis' discussion of foreigners in relation to music and morality, commenting that 'Most musicians, he was convinced, were embodiments of virtue, except for 'a large number of very low-class foreigners, with foreign habits and very foreign morals [who] have unhappily taken up their abode in England'.[8] This 'othering' of foreigners as abiding by different moral codes and being morally distinct from English players may have meant that audiences and critics were more receptive to female foreigners playing the violin than they would have been towards a native woman violinist; female violin playing may have been regarded as one of the 'foreign habits' described by Haweis.

It is also important to understand England–and London in particular–as being an environment particularly receptive to child prodigies. Rachel Cowgill's work on W.A. Mozart and prodigies in early Georgian London highlights the growth in popularity of child prodigies throughout the eighteenth century, and explains that "When the Mozarts arrived in London in

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[7] Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain Since the Eighteenth Century: a Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 18.

[8] Ibid., 67.

1764, they encountered an established tradition of and accepted conventions for the public exhibition of musical children'.[9] Although Cowgill's work focuses on an earlier period than that explored in this thesis, her description of London as a musical climate which had been historically receptive to child prodigies frames the activities of the six case studies in this thesis as being a continuation of this culture. Cowgill notes that the majority of working musicians came from musical families, and she suggests that being able to 'exhibit' an advanced child performer would have financially very useful for these families. The female players discussed in this thesis can therefore be understood as part of a longer tradition of child performers from the musician class, and this may also have given them added legitimacy.

Jeanne Bamberger's work has also identified psychological challenges for child prodigies in maintaining a career to adulthood, which may have been relevant to these female players. [10] Bamberger describes a musical 'midlife crisis' encountered by players navigating the shift from child prodigy to adult player, a sort of identity crisis encompassing 'musical conflicts and tensions', for example, questioning or challenging approaches to previously used learning and decoding strategies, as well as the purpose and nature of the playing itself.[11] When considered in the context of nineteenth-century England, and the confines placed on female players, this sort of crisis may well have been exacerbated by social norms and practical questions around maintaining a performance career.

Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen and Louise Gautherot both had successful but short-lived appearances as solo violinists in late-eighteenth century London. However, the careers of both violinists waned quickly following their initial success, and they appear to have faced difficulties in maintaining their careers. The cause of this struggle is not fully clear, but this was not an issue unique to female players, as some of their male contemporaries, including Cramer and Salomon, also struggled to sustain playing careers in London; Simon McVeigh's research has highlighted that many foreign artists struggled to maintain careers once their initial novelty had worn off and they become 'regulars'.[12] For Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen, balancing a performance career with the roles of wife and mother might also have been an additional factor. Lombardini Sirmen's

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[9] Rachel Cowgill, '"Proofs of genius": Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and the construction of musical prodigies in early Georgian London,' in *Musical Prodigies: Interpretations from Psychology, Education, Musicology, and Ethnomusicology,* ed. Gary McPherson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016), 512-513.

[10] Jeanne Bamberger, 'Growing-up prodigies: The midlife crisis,' in *Musical Prodigies: Interpretations from Psychology, Education, Musicology, and Ethnomusicology*, ed. Gary McPherson (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016).

[11] Ibid., 317.

[12] Simon McVeigh, *Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 82.

marriage seems to have contained an underlying current of tension and they spent much time living apart, while Gautherot's 'indisposition' and subsequent effective retirement may well have related to a pregnancy and family demands.

It is difficult to fully assess the critical response to Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen's London performances, due to the limited length and depth of published reviews. This was not necessarily indicative of public reactions to their performances, as this type of brief review was fairly typical of the period. Reviews of Gautherot's concerts in London tended to be superficial, and resorted to heavily gendered tropes; descriptions of her playing as 'exquisite' were a recurring feature, and her 'delicacy' was also often praised. Despite this, she was compared favourably to her male counterparts. There was little depth to the engagement with Gautherot's playing, although she attracted criticism for a lack of power and was perceived as mainly succeeding in her playing of 'pretty' music. Meanwhile, although Lombardini Sirmen's continental reviews were positive, these frequently cast her in the role of muse, rather than discussing aspects of her playing. There are very few reviews relating to her English performances, and the comparative lack of these in contrast to responses to Gautherot less than twenty years later suggests that Lombardini Sirmen was not engaged with as a serious artist.

Despite their relatively brief careers on the English concert scene, both Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen made an impact upon the consciousness of the London musical public, and both were frequently discussed in later nineteenth-century articles on female violin playing, as well as many of the histories, dictionaries and encyclopaedias published throughout the nineteenth century.

In the 1830s–1840s, the Milanollo sisters appeared in England, and despite some evident unease about the spectacle of female violin playing, the press reaction to the sisters was generally supportive and positive. Teresa Milanollo's solo trip to England in 1837–1838 was positively received, but she may have circumvented the objections to women violinists by presenting herself as a child prodigy (possibly because the novelty of a child prodigy attracted an audience). When the sisters visited England together in 1845, they appear to have been engaged with as genuine artists rather than novelties. However, the sisters' appearances together drew more heavily gendered comments from the critics, with Maria's (the younger sister) playing praised over Teresa's. Objections to women violinists were discussed in several of the reviews, but were not typically levelled at the sisters.

Reports by the London press on Teresa Milanollo's apparent solo success on the continent after Maria's death and the impact of the Milanollos' performances in England can be witnessed in how Teresa in particular became a benchmark for female violinists throughout the following decades. In comparison with Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen, there was significantly more

critical engagement with the Milanollo's playing, with far lengthier reviews produced in response to their performances. While this difference might be partly attributed to changing critical conventions, there is markedly more critical interest and engagement present throughout the Milanollos' reviews.

The Milanollo sisters were followed in the late 1860s–1870s by Wilma Norman-Neruda and Camilla Urso. Both Norman-Neruda and Urso gained a generally positive reception from audiences and critics, reviews of their performances were detailed, suggesting genuine critical engagement, and they were positively compared to their male counterparts. However, their performances divided some critical responses, many of which exemplified the arguments at the crux of the issues around women and virtuosity: in particular, the extent to which female players could successfully interpret and realise compositional intent, and a divide in responses to repertoire, with less technically challenging movements being praised over the more demanding ones.

Urso and Norman-Neruda's careers were particularly significant because leading chamber music formed a key part of their musical activities alongside their solo playing, indicating acceptance of their status as female violinists by both musical peers and the public. Their chamber music activities suggest a relaxing of attitudes to women performing, as the act of leadership from the violin placed Urso and Norman-Neruda in a musically authoritative role over their male collaborators. The longevity of both women's careers was also unusual. Where the careers of Gautherot, Lombardini Sirmen, Teresa Milanollo and others gradually waned, Norman-Neruda and Urso were the first women violinists to sustain a performing career past marriage and well into adulthood; indeed, both players continued performing for most of the rest of their lives.

The lives and careers of the six women who comprise the case studies in this project offer a valuable overview and insight into attitudes towards women violinists during the period 1770–1872, and reveal much about the extent to which a 'ban' or prejudice against female players was in evidence. All six women started playing the violin at a young age, and commenced their careers as child prodigies. Maintaining a career beyond this point was clearly a challenge; Teresa Milanollo appears to have misrepresented her age in order to market herself as a prodigy, while for Lombardini Sirmen and Gautherot, marriage presented challenges and conflicts with a performing career. Significantly, the Milanollo sisters did not return to Britain after 1845, although they continued to tour Europe; their concerts were reported on intermittently by the British press. Teresa paused her playing career after Maria's death, aged 15, in 1848, but she subsequently travelled and performed alone until her marriage in 1857, when effectively retired from playing. Similarly, although Camilla Urso pursued a lengthy and highly successful career in the United States, she did not return to England. While there may have been other factors at play for both artists, this

suggests that not all female performers may have felt that the English environment was conducive to critically successful performances as a female violinist.

Through these three case study chapters, a shifting critical reception over the course of the nineteenth century emerges for the first time. Reviews for all six performers tended to be at least superficially positive. However, a changing level of critical engagement is evident during the period; Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen received few in-depth or meaningful reviews, and there was a particular dearth of engagement with Lombardini Sirmen's playing. However, critical responses changed markedly by the time of the Milanollos' performances; the sisters received more detailed, genuine commentary on their playing, although the issue of their being female violinists was negated by their active presentation of themselves as child prodigies. This heightened level of engagement was extended further in reviews of Camilla Urso and Wilma Norman-Neruda's playing, which discussed aspects of both women's playing in detail, and drew favourable comparisons between them and their male contemporaries. However, the politicised aspects of some reviews – in particular, discussions of intrinsic differences between male and female players, such as power and interpretative faculty – reveal that a complex dialogue around the nature and role of women in music was still in evidence, and obstacles to women players were not yet fully overcome.

However, changes in journalistic norms may also have impacted the shifts in critical reception that are evident across the case studies. At the point that Gautherot and Lombardini Sirmen were performing in England, music criticism such as concert reviews was in its infancy, and the lack of in-depth reviews of their playing is in part a reflection of this. By the time the Milanollo sisters were forming in England in the mid-century, the increase in dedicated journals and newspaper columns on music resulted in a greater number of reviews and more extended discussion of performances, which allowed for greater depth of critical engagement. By the time that Norman-Neruda and Urso were playing in the 1860s, this had developed further still, with the role of the professional critic now firmly established, and a litany of musical journals and publications in existence which allowed not only for critical engagement with individual players or performances, but also for the discussion and exchange of ideas around of broader aesthetic, socio-musical and philosophical concerns in relation to music.

The most compelling argument for the importance of early women violinists is found in late-nineteenth-century musical literature. The dramatic increase in female violinists in the last quarter of the century sparked widespread discussion in the musical press about women violinists, with much of the writing apparently sympathetic to the cause. A recurrent trait of these articles was to defend the practice of women playing the violin through invoking the example of earlier female performers on the instrument, highlighting their contribution, and consequently reframing

female violin performance as part of a longer tradition, presumably to legitimise the performances of contemporary female players.

This phenomenon appeared as early as 1839, when *The Musical World* cited the example of Louise Gautherot, Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen and numerous other of their contemporaries to support their argument 'why should not a lady play on the violin?' In 1876, *The Musical World* published an article arguing a tradition of female string playing, opening with the assertion that 'There has been no lack of lady violinists' and arguing the point through the citation examples from the Tudor period, through to Lombardini Sirmen, Gautherot, the Milanollos and several of their successors, including the Milanollos and Norman-Neruda.[13] Gertrude Ogden's 'Growth of violin playing by women' in 1899 similarly invoked the example of female players dating back to the 1600s, highlighting their importance, particularly that of Teresa Milanollo, stating that, 'it may be said that increase in violin playing by women really began some forty years ago, as a result of the Milanollo influence on the Continent.'[14] Consequently, these articles bear testament to the importance of the influence of earlier female performers on the violin.

There is further work to be done on the topic; extended research on any of these female players would make a valuable addition to the existing literature on women and the violin. For example, more in-depth investigation of primary sources could further illuminate the existing knowledge on female players such as Louise Gautherot, where there is a need for more biographical and contextual information. The introduction to this work highlighted the linguistic challenges of interpreting nineteenth-century reviews, and a multilingual study, providing detailed examination of the reception of specific women violinists across Europe, would add a useful perspective to the existing scholarship on attitudes towards female violin playing outside England.

Many questions remain around women's careers on the violin in England (especially in London) in the period 1770-1872. This study has focused on the performing activities of female violinists during this time, but questions remain about their broader careers and how these might have changed over time. For example, although many of their male contemporaries are known to have taught alongside their performing activities, little evidence has been uncovered to suggest that the same might be true of these women players. It is possible that some women did teach, but they may have struggled to recruit female pupils, and questions arise around social conventions in regard to teaching male pupils. It would also be useful to investigate what amount of work players undertook per annum, and how this related to the lengthening London season between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Players often returned to continental Europe once the season

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[13] [Unsigned] 'OCCASIONAL NOTES,' *The Musical World* 54, no. 42 (Oct 14, 1876), 694.

[14] Ogden, Gertrude Paulette. 'Growth of violin playing by women' *The Violin Times* 6/67 (May 1899). 126.

had ended, and future research might investigate their activities outside of England in order to build a more holistic picture of the form their careers took. The extent to which women violinist's careers amounted to a full livelihood or financial independence is also unclear. None of the women discussed in the case study chapters of this thesis came from wealthy families, and several were effectively single, either having separated from their husbands or through widowhood. Although it is possible that marital stipends might have been agreed, or that wealthy benefactors may have provided some support, this does suggest at least a degree of financial independence gained through a performance career.

Little evidence has been found to suggest any English professional female violinists were active before 1870, but further investigation of European players such as those outlined in the introduction to this work would be valuable. It is also possible that further native recreational violinists like Lady Anne Blunt and Lady Charlotte Campbell Bury may be identified through further investigation of sources such as diaries and letters. Investigation into both these European professional and English amateur players and their activities – alongside any native players who attempted a career and have so far remained undiscovered – would ultimately refine the picture of who helped to ease the English social strictures on women's public and recreational violin playing.

It is evident that the early women violinists discussed in this thesis faced challenges in their careers, balancing their playing with social conventions and expectations regarding marital and familial responsibilities, often struggling to sustain careers past an initial public interest, or abandoning performance upon marriage. Nevertheless, they did gain positive reviews, appear to have been taken seriously by their fellow musicians, and a surprising amount of the press coverage appears to have been positive and supportive, even if lacking in critical engagement. The positive reactions were clearly sustained enough in the public imagination for them to be drawn on even at the end of the nineteenth century; they therefore not only set a powerful precedent for the late-nineteenth century 'violin revolution', but act as evidence that the acceptance of women violinists began far earlier, and in a far more gradual and nuanced way than the existing work on them allows, and their careers are therefore worth further study and evaluation.

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