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# Evolution versus Authenticity: Johannes Brahms, Robert Franz, and Continuo Practice in the Late Nineteenth Century

ELAINE KELLY

The early-music revival in the second half of the nineteenth century was a hotbed of controversy. Bitter disputes arose over performing and editorial practices, and throughout the 1860s and 70s, the period during which Brahms was most active as a performer, arranger, and editor, the German music press was inundated with a barrage of editions, pamphlets, articles, and correspondence—all emphatically staking positions in the debate.<sup>1</sup> At the crux of the

debate lay the fact that the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the past had its origins in two diametrically opposed philosophies. Much of nineteenth-century thought was evolutionary in outlook, centering on the concept of progress over time. A new value was placed on the past, but it was fueled primarily by the belief that awareness of the past was essential to understanding the present. This standpoint, articulated most influentially by Hegel in Germany, had considerable implications for the early-music revival: if art, like civilization, manifested itself in increasingly perfect forms, then revivalists were justified in modernizing early art to appeal to the more sophisticated demands of nineteenth-century audiences.

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<sup>1</sup>Two of the most valuable sources on the controversy are Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen, "Die Bach-Gesamtausgabe und die Kontroversen um die Aufführungspraxis der Vokalwerke," *Bach und die Nachwelt 2*, ed. Michael Heinemann and Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1999), pp. 227–97; and Dieter Gutknecht, "Robert Franz als Bearbeiter der Werke von Bach und Händel und die Praxis

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seiner Zeit," *Robert Franz (1815–1892): Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Konferenz anlässlich seines 100. Todestages am 23. und 24. Oktober 1992 in Halle/Saale*, ed. Konstanze Musketa (Halle: Händel-Haus, 1993), pp. 219–47.

Hegel himself advocated a process of “necessary anachronism,”<sup>2</sup> whereby old works should be adapted to cater to the cultural requirements of a modern audience:

Even the most excellent things *require* adaptation in view of this. Admittedly, people could say that the truly excellent must remain excellent for all time; but the work of art also has a transient, mortal side, and it is this that requires alteration. For the beautiful appears for different people, and those for whom it is brought to appearance must be able to be at home in this external side of its appearance. . . . The inner substance of that which is represented remains the same, but cultural change makes necessary a conversion of its expression and form.<sup>3</sup>

For adherents of the opposing “Romantic” school, however, the past represented something very different, something to be appreciated for its own sake. In the wake of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, a strong sense of disillusionment with the present helped foster a longing among Romantics for an idealized past. William Vaughan has perceptively described this as “a mythical golden age, an ‘age of faith’ to be contrasted with the degenerate atheism and materialism of modern times.”<sup>4</sup> For followers of this school of thought, early music was to be treated with reverence. Anton F. J. Thibaut, as James Garratt points out, advocated performing early church compositions “as purely as the master intended” and denigrated Mozart’s arrangement of Handel’s *Messiah* as “meddling.”<sup>5</sup>

This opposition took a new shape in the second half of the nineteenth century with the

rise of musicology as a discipline. As heightened scholarly awareness gave credence to Thibaut’s mandate, certain musicians became increasingly concerned with presenting early music in as unaltered a form as possible. Among the first to show a concern for authenticity was Mendelssohn, who, in the preface to his edition of Handel’s *Israel in Egypt* for the London Handel Society in 1844, declared:

I think it my first duty, to lay before the Society the Score as Handel wrote it, without introducing the least alteration, and without mixing up any remarks or notes of my own with those of Handel. In the next place, as there is no doubt that he himself introduced many things at the performance of his works which were not accurately written down, and which even now, when his music is performed, are supplied by a sort of tradition according to the fancy of the Conductor and the Organist, it becomes my second duty to offer an opinion in all such cases; but I think it of paramount importance that all my remarks should be kept strictly separate from the Original Score, and the latter should be given in its entire purity, in order to afford every one an opportunity of resorting to Handel himself, and not to obtrude any suggestions of mine upon those who may differ from me in opinion.<sup>6</sup>

The founding of the Bach Gesellschaft in 1850, with its lofty scholarly aims for the proposed complete edition of the composer’s works, firmly grounded the new erudite approach to the revival of early music. The Gesellschaft’s objective, as outlined in the preface to its first volume in 1850, was to offer true representations of Bach’s works, based on the original sources and with no changes, cuts, or additions.<sup>7</sup> Musicologists including Friedrich Chrysander, Philipp Spitta, and Heinrich Bellermann embraced this ideal in their later scholarly endeavors. They found strong opposition, however, in a faction led by the composer Robert Franz, whose aesthetic drew heavily on the Hegelian premise of progress. Franz and his chief supporters, Selmar Bagge and Julius Schaeffer, were largely unconcerned with his-

<sup>2</sup>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Ästhetik*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge, 2 vols. (2nd edn. Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1965), I, 272. The term is translated by James Garratt in *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 224.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 224–25.

<sup>4</sup>William Vaughan, *German Romantic Painting* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Anton F. J. Thibaut, *Über Reinheit der Tonkunst* (Heidelberg: Mohr, 1825). Cited in James Garratt, *Palestrina and the German Romantic Imagination*, p. 224. Garratt touches on the two opposing approaches that affected the early-music revival. For a more general account of the two schools of thought, see the “Progress and historicism” section of Glenn Stanley’s article on “Historiography” in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd edn. London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 11, pp. 546–61.

<sup>6</sup>Handel, *Israel in Egypt* (London: London Handel Society, 1844), preface.

<sup>7</sup>J. S. *Bach’s Werke* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1850), p. iv.

torical performance practices.<sup>8</sup> They were clearly committed to the revival, but maintained that music, instruments, and listener expectations had evolved since the time of Bach and Handel, a fact that had to be taken into account if early music was to find an audience. Underlying their assertions was an unwavering sense that their actions ultimately served the composer. Bagge, for instance, in his laudatory review of Franz's arrangement of Bach's *Trauer-Ode*, justified Franz's additions to the original orchestration on the grounds that Bach was not aware of the demands a modern orchestra would make. Bach, according to Bagge, "could have had no idea that the modern orchestra would require completely different considerations and proportions."<sup>9</sup> The debate between the two sides was wide ranging. By far the most fiercely contested issue, however, was that truly elusive Baroque legacy, the continuo tradition. The shortage of solid evidence concerning realization practices allowed extensive liberties to be taken with the continuo part; consequently, both factions appropriated it as a platform for their aesthetics.

#### BRAHMS AND CHRYSANDER'S EDITION OF HANDEL'S DUETS AND TRIOS

The controversies surrounding continuo realization were of particular relevance to Brahms. In addition to preparing continuo parts for his performances of Bach's and Handel's choral music, he also realized a number of continuo parts for publication. He anonymously edited C. P. E. Bach's Violin Sonatas in B Minor (H. 512) and C Minor (H. 514), arranging a piano part from the figured-bass line.<sup>10</sup> At Chrysander's request he realized piano accompani-

<sup>8</sup>Selmar Bagge (1823–96) was a German critic, composer, and teacher. He edited the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (hereafter *AmZ*) from 1863 to 1868 and was director of the Musikhochschule in Basle from 1868 until his death. Julius Schaeffer (1823–1902) was director of the Breslau Singakademie from 1860 to 1901.

<sup>9</sup>"[Er] konnte keine Ahnung davon haben, wie das heutige Orchester ganz andere Dispositionen und Verhältnisse zur Voraussetzung hat" (Bagge, "Joh. Seb. Bach's Trauer-Ode, bearbeitet von Robert Franz," *AmZ* 1 [1866], 325–27, at 326). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>10</sup>The sonatas were published by Rieter-Biedermann in 1864.

ments for a number of Handel's Italian duets and trios.<sup>11</sup> He also allowed Carl Grädener to publish his figured-bass arrangement of the chorale "Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid," from Bach's *Sie werden euch in den Bann tun*, BWV 44, in Grädener's textbook *System der Harmonielehre*.<sup>12</sup>

Brahms's scholarly inclinations have been well documented,<sup>13</sup> and, predictably, his approach to Baroque music reflected a high level of historical awareness. Consequently, it comes as little surprise that Brahms had no time for Franz's elaborate continuo arrangements. Kalbeck reports:

Brahms deemed Franz's modern orchestrations and the opulent polyphony that he derived from the figured bass to be presumptuous; he viewed the arrangements as an audacious and reprehensible assault [on Bach]. . . . Do you believe, I asked him, that Bach, when he sat at the organ and accompanied arias, would have been content with a simple harmonic solution of the figured bass? "Quod licet Bacho non licet Francisco," he replied wittily.<sup>14</sup>

Brahms declined to engage in any written debate with Franz and his supporters; the fiasco that resulted from his part in the manifesto against the New German School in 1860 had firmly suppressed any such inclinations. Through his involvement with Chrysander's

<sup>11</sup>*G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (Leipzig: Ausgabe der Deutschen Händelgesellschaft, 1870; rev. 1880).

<sup>12</sup>Carl Grädener, *System der Harmonielehre* (Hamburg: Grädener, 1877), pp. 287–90.

<sup>13</sup>See, for instance, David Brodbeck, "The Brahms-Joachim Counterpoint Exchange; or Robert, Clara and the 'Best Harmony between Joseph and Johannes'," *Brahms Studies*, vol. I, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), pp. 30–80; Imogen Fellinger, "Brahms und die Musik vergangener Epochen," *Die Ausbreitung des Historismus über die Musik*, ed. Walter Wiora (Regensburg: Bosse, 1969), pp. 147–63; and Virginia Hancock, *Brahms's Choral Compositions and His Library of Early Music* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1983).

<sup>14</sup>"Ihm [Brahms] kamen die Modernisierungen der Instrumentation und die üppige Polyphonie, die Franz aus dem Generalbaß entwickelte, unbescheiden vor; sie schienen ihm dreiste und tadelnswerte Übergriffe zu sein. . . . Glauben Sie, fragte ich ihn, daß Bach, wenn er an der Orgel saß und Arien begleitete sich mit der einfachen harmonischen Auflösung des bezifferten Basses begnügt haben würde? 'Quod licet Bacho non licet Francisco' replizierte er schlagfertig" (Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 4 vols. [Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1912–15], I, 281).

edition of Handel's Italian duets and trios, however, he became embroiled in one of the key disputes of the early-music revival: the question of how the continuo part should be realized.

The edition in question was first published in 1870 as volume 32 of *G. F. Händel's Werke*. It contains thirteen duets and two trios, with piano accompaniments realized for nos. 1, 2, and 4–6 by Chrysander, no. 3 by Joseph Joachim, and the remainder of the duets and the two trios by Brahms. Predictably, given the different skills and abilities of the three arrangers, the accompaniments are by no means uniform in style. As Chrysander acknowledged in the foreword to the second edition, the accompaniments are "now difficult, now simple, now elaborate, now rich, now meager."<sup>15</sup> A common denominator uniting all of the arrangements, however, is their consistent adherence to Chrysander's criteria for Baroque realizations. The latter advocated simplicity where realizations were concerned and rejected excessive contrapuntal writing in favor of predominantly harmonic textures, points he made very clear when outlining the type of continuo parts he wanted Brahms to supply for his Gesellschaft edition:

Where the arrangement itself is concerned, I confess that I do not want any more counterpoint than occurs on this sample sheet, and believe accompaniments that do less and concern themselves more with simple harmonic movement will be entirely adequate and sufficient for the songs. . . . I mention this point especially because the printed arrangement (by the English man Smart) is so completely amiss in its figuration and counterpoint.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup>*G. F. Händel's Werke*, vol. 32, preface.

<sup>16</sup>"Was die Begleitung selbst anlangt, so gestehe ich, daß ich nicht mehr contrapunktieren möchte, als auf diesem Probeblatt geschehen ist, und glaube, daß Begleitungen ganz gut und genügend zu dem Gesange sein werden, die hierin noch weniger thun und sich noch mehr nur einfach harmonisch bewegen. . . . Ich erwähne diesen Punkt aber besonders deshalb, weil die beigedruckte Begleitung (von dem Engländer Smart) so ganz in das Figuriren und Contrapunktiren sich verirrt hat" (letter of 1 Jan. 1870, Jürgen Neubacher, "Ein neuer Quellenfund zur Mitarbeit Johannes Brahms' an Friedrich Chrysanders Ausgabe von Händels 'Italienischen Duetten und Trios' (1870)," *Musikforschung* 51 [1998], 210–15, at 210).

The "printed arrangement" referred to by Chrysander is the edition of the same duets and trios that had been published by the English Handel Society in 1852 with figured-bass realizations by Henry Smart. The edition was a significant motivating factor behind Chrysander's own publication.<sup>17</sup> His insistence on homophonic realizations did not, however, simply stem from his wish to address the inadequacies he perceived in the earlier edition; he was also undoubtedly motivated by his desire to stake his position on one of the most bitter polemics to divide the revivalist movement.

As Brahms intimated to Kalbeck, the notion of a "simple harmonic solution of the figured bass" was anathema to Franz and his supporters, who argued vociferously in favor of polyphonic realizations on a variety of grounds. Franz, for instance, claimed a historical precedence, asserting that Bach and his contemporaries filled out "gaps" in scores with detailed organ parts.<sup>18</sup> Albert Hahn meanwhile argued for contrapuntal realizations on aesthetic grounds, claiming that homophonic realizations were akin to a "bear on a flowerbed."<sup>19</sup>

However diverse their justifications for polyphonic realizations, the modernists were firmly united in the conviction that the homophonic realizations supplied by Chrysander and other musicologists were a product not of their historical awareness but of their artistic inadequacy. The notion that musicologists were simply dilettantes not qualified to realize ac-

<sup>17</sup>See Neubacher, "Ein neuer Quellenfund zur Mitarbeit Brahms' an Chrysanders Ausgabe"; Waltraut Schardig, *Friedrich Chrysander: Leben und Werk*, Hamburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 32 (Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1986), pp. 153–55; and Howard Serwer, "Brahms and the Three Editions of Handel's Chamber Duets and Trios," *Händel-Jahrbuch* 39 (1993), 134–60.

<sup>18</sup>In the preface to his edition of *Johann Sebastian Bach, 36 Arien aus verschiedenen Kantaten*, published by C. F. Peters in 1860, Franz explained: "Zunächst waren die Lücken, welche zu Bach's Zeiten durch den freien Hinzutritt der Orgel ergänzt wurden, nach Anleitung der Baßbezeichnung und—wo möglich—in Bach's Geiste durch Hinzufügung von bewegten Füllstimmen zu beseitigen." See *Robert Franz: Gesammelte Schriften über Wiederbelebung Bach'scher und Händel'scher Werke*, ed. Robert Bethge (Leipzig: Leuckart, 1910), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup>Albert Hahn, "Bach's Cantate *Wer da gläubet und getauft wird*," p. 67; cited in Hinrichsen, "Die Bach-Gesamtausgabe und die Kontroverse um die Aufführungspraxis der Vokalwerke," p. 242.

companiments was one that had been gathering pace throughout the 1860s and 70s. In 1865 an anonymous supporter of Franz, writing in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, dismissed the scholarly camp as “musical Nazarenes.”<sup>20</sup> By the 1870s attitudes had hardened and critiques of musicologists’ creative abilities were increasingly vitriolic and filled with contempt. Albert Hahn, for instance, in 1876 denigrated the “invasion of scholars” (*die Gelehrte-Invasion*) that had infiltrated the early-music revival, and, regarding Chrysander’s and Spitta’s arranging attempts, advised that “it is compulsory not to spare these two usurpers, but to lay bare their horrendous ‘musical’ weaknesses instead.”<sup>21</sup> A year later, Schaeffer published an even more damning critique of Chrysander’s abilities, finding in his piano reduction of Handel’s *Judas Maccabeus* “nowhere a spot where one would want to dwell with satisfaction! Nowhere a ray or even a scrap of creative power to which one could warm. Everywhere uneven spots, dull spots, unpleasant spots that wound the refined mind! Everywhere a wretched desert of impotence!”<sup>22</sup> Schaeffer concluded his diatribe by advising Chrysander to give up his arranging attempts and return to his scholarly studies.<sup>23</sup>

Chrysander was decidedly restrained in the face of this onslaught, and by and large he refrained from responding in print. He was riled, however, by an 1869 review of Gluck’s *Armide* in the *Neue freie Presse* in which Hanslick gave full vent to his aversion to musicologists. Dismissing them as “artistic zealots” (*Kunst-*

*zeloten*), Hanslick criticized at length the damaging effect of their “philological literalism” on attempts to revive early music.<sup>24</sup> Chrysander responded with an agitated reply in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, in which he emphatically refuted accusations of musical pedantry.<sup>25</sup> At this stage, however, he clearly felt that something stronger than a written response was needed, that the best way to silence his critics was to publish a musical manifesto of his aesthetics. The volume of Italian duets and trios, significantly the only volume of the complete Handel edition for which Chrysander furnished a full set of figured-bass realizations,<sup>26</sup> appears to have been conceived precisely to this end. Tellingly, he wrote to Brahms regarding the edition on 24 January 1870: “The carping will gradually stop—that I do not doubt—only when more work of this type is presented in print. One will then have a firm position and the musicians will gradually comprehend what *can* be written down, and how it *should* be played. I consider this a great result, also of the highest importance for the understanding of the old things.”<sup>27</sup>

That Chrysander intended the volume to be a pointed contribution to the continuo debate seems particularly evident given his decision to solicit accompaniments from Brahms and Joachim. The latter assisted Chrysander with several volumes of the complete Handel edition in an anonymous capacity.<sup>28</sup> In the case of the Italian duets and trios, however, Chrysander

<sup>20</sup>“Bearbeitung älterer Vocalwerke von Robert Franz,” *AmZ* 3 (1865), 417–22, 433–36, 449–56, 473–81, 489–96, at 434.

<sup>21</sup>“So ist es doch eine Pflicht, diese beiden Usurpatoren nicht zu schonen, sondern ihre wirklich horrenden ‘musikalischen’ Schwächen bloßzulegen” (“Chrysanders Klavierauszüge,” *Die Tonkunst* 1 [1876], 243; cited in Gutknecht, “Robert Franz als Bearbeiter der Werke von Bach und Händel und die Praxis seiner Zeit,” p. 242, n. 554).

<sup>22</sup>“Nirgends ein Punkt, bei welchem man mit Wohlgefallen verweilen möchte! Nirgends ein Strahl, oder auch nur ein Funken schöpferischer Kraft, an dem man sich hätte erwärmen können! Ueberall Unebenheiten, Plattheiten, Unschönheiten, die den feineren Sinn verwunden! Ueberall trostlose Oede der Impotenz!” (“Friedrich Chrysander’s Klavierauszüge zur deutschen Händel-Ausgabe,” *Allgemeine Deutsche Musik-Zeitung* 3 [1876], 109–21, at 110).

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>24</sup>The relevant parts of the review are quoted in Chrysander, “Was Herr Prof. Hanslick sich unter ‘Kunstzeloten’ vorstellt,” *AmZ* 4 (1869), 387–89.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 389.

<sup>26</sup>As Howard Serwer observes, the oratorios and other English vocal works are furnished with piano reductions of the orchestral score, while, with the exception of *Alcina* (vol. 86) and the third act of *Muzio Scevola* (vol. 64), the instrumental works and vocal works with Italian texts have no accompaniments whatsoever. “Brahms and the Three Editions of Handel’s Chamber Duets and Trios,” p. 134.

<sup>27</sup>“Das Kitteln wird mehr und mehr aufhören—daran zweifle ich nicht—wenn erst mehrere Arbeiten dieser Art gedruckt vorgelegt sind. Man wird dann einen festen Grund haben und die Musiker werden nach und nach begreifen, was aufgeschrieben werden *kann*, und wie es gespielt werden *soll*. Ich halte dies für ein großes Resultat, auch für das Verständnis der alten Sachen höchst wichtig” (Schardig, *Friedrich Chrysander*, p. 300).

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 161.

was eager to publicize Joachim's involvement. He wrote in the foreword to the edition: "The pianoforte accompaniment to the third duet is by J. Joachim; that to the greater part of this collection, viz. to duets VII to XIII and the two trios, by J. Brahms." Chrysander was well aware of the cachet that Brahms and Joachim afforded his publications. He had drafted them as nominal editors of his *Denkmäler der Tonkunst* edition the previous year, writing to Bellermann: "You will find out over the years, what you (we) can do *with* him [Joachim] and how little *without* him. That I get on well with him and Brahms has made everything (newspaper, *Denkmäler*—yes also the *Denkmäler* despite your and my efforts!!) really possible."<sup>29</sup> His decision to engage the pair to write accompaniments for the Italian duets and trios was a particularly astute one. By publishing homophonic realizations arranged by men of the musical caliber of Brahms and Joachim, Chrysander made it difficult, if not impossible, for Franz and his cohorts to dismiss his realization practices primarily on artistic grounds.

#### FRANZ'S OPEN LETTER TO HANSLICK AND ITS AFTERMATH

The strategy was a successful one, although it did not have the effect of quieting the critics as Chrysander had hoped: quite the opposite. Franz immediately perceived the threat of the edition to his own arrangements of Handel and Bach and was incensed.<sup>30</sup> He wrote regarding the matter to Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach,

<sup>29</sup>"Sie werden schon mit den Jahren erfahren, was Sie (wir) mit ihm und wie wenig wir *ohne* ihn machen können. Daß ich mit ihm und Brahms gut stehe, hat mir überhaupt alles (Zeitung, *Denkmäler* – ja auch die *Denkmäler* trotz Ihrer u. meiner Mühe!!) erst möglich gemacht" (letter of 22 Sept. 1869, cited in Werner Rackwitz, "Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis Friedrich Chrysanders zu Johannes Brahms und Joseph Joachim," *Brahms Studien* 12 [1999], 41–60, at 46; italics are Chrysander's). The newspaper to which Chrysander is referring presumably is the *AmZ*, which he edited between 1868–71 and 1874–82, and to which Bellermann made numerous contributions. Regarding the nature of Brahms's role as editor of Chrysander's *Denkmäler* edition of Couperin's *Pièces de Clavecin*, see Elaine Kelly, "An Unexpected Champion of François Couperin: Johannes Brahms and the 'Pièces de Clavecin,'" *Music & Letters* 85 (2004), 576–601.

<sup>30</sup>For details on the works of Handel and Bach that Franz arranged, see Bethge, *Robert Franz*.

venting in particular about Chrysander, "whose eternal rabble-rousing I will have to thank especially, if in the future I cannot find a publisher for that kind of work."<sup>31</sup> Posterity has not judged Franz's arrangements favorably; consequently, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that he was deeply committed to the early-music revival. He maintained that he had a unique empathy with the musical language of Bach and Handel and claimed that his arrangements served to illuminate the music.<sup>32</sup> Of his Bach arrangements, for instance, he observed that they had "no purpose other than to show Bach's high mastery in a favorable light."<sup>33</sup> Franz's service to Bach and Handel was not, however, entirely selfless. He was all too aware of the limited success of his own compositions and was determined that his arrangements would be his musical legacy; as he informed Senfft von Pilsach: "The future of my *Lieder* can be disputed—but not my arrangements. To the extent that Bach and Handel are a thousand times greater than the poor devil that I am, I will live on with them in infinitum."<sup>34</sup> Chrysander's activities presented a substantial threat to Franz's quest for musical immortality.

In retaliation Franz penned a militant thirty-six-page open letter to the like-minded critic Eduard Hanslick, justifying his own continuo arrangements and roundly condemning the practices advocated by the musicologists.<sup>35</sup> At the center of the letter was Chrysander's volume of

<sup>31</sup>"Dessen ewigen Hetzereien ich es namentlich zu verdanken haben werde, wenn ich in Zukunft keinen Verleger für dergl. Arbeiten mehr finde" (letter of 13 June 1871, in *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach: Ein Briefwechsel 1861–1888*, ed. Wolfgang Golther [Berlin: Duncker, 1907], p. 100).

<sup>32</sup>Wilhelm Waldmann, for instance, recorded a conversation with Franz in which the latter remarked: "Wo ist Einer, der sich so in Bach's und Händel's Empfindungsweise hineingelebt hätte und hineinfinden könnte, wie ich es gethan habe" (*Robert Franz: Gespräche aus zehn Jahren* [Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1895], p. 114).

<sup>33</sup>"Keinen andern Zweck hat, als Bach's hohe Meisterschaft erst recht ins Licht zu setzen" (*Ibid.*, p. 97).

<sup>34</sup>"Ueber die Zukunft meiner Lieder kann gestritten werden—über die meine Bearbeitungen aber nicht. In dem Maaße als Bach und Händel tausendmal größer sind, als ich armer Teufel es bin, werde ich doch mit ihnen in infinitum fortleben" (letter of 10 Feb. 1876, in *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach*, p. 221).

<sup>35</sup>Franz, *Offener Brief an Eduard Hanslick ueber Bearbeitungen älterer Tonwerke namentlich Bach'scher und Händel'scher Vocalmusik* (Leipzig: Leuckart, 1871).

duets and trios, in which Franz, unsurprisingly, found nothing to praise. He had much to say about the lack of artistry in the volume and, naturally, disapproved of the absence of counterpoint.<sup>36</sup> His critique was not, however, confined to aesthetic matters. He also attempted to undermine the scholarly credibility of the edition by compiling a list of parallel fifths and octaves that he had observed in the arrangements. This he prefaced with the caustic remark: "Hopefully each man will agree with me that Handel's style allows for no schoolboy mistakes—fifths, octaves and things that are frowned upon like that whatever you want to call them—to be imposed on it."<sup>37</sup>

This was a tactic employed by Franz on other occasions; most notably he attempted to downplay Kirnberger's largely homophonic realization of the trio sonata from Bach's *Musical Offering* by dismissing it as strewn with errors.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the Handel duets and trios, his attack was clearly designed to deal with the particular problems presented by Chrysander's edition. Although Franz did not openly differentiate between the arrangements of Chrysander, Brahms, and Joachim in his open letter, the thrust of his criticisms suggests clear distinctions. Joachim notably escaped censure. Apart from the fact that he arranged only one duet, Franz did not perceive him as a threat. He dismissed him to Senfft von Pilsach with the remark "it is hard to comprehend that a man of taste can publish such rubbish under his name."<sup>39</sup> Chrysander and Brahms, on the other hand, posed significant problems. Chrysander's scholarly endeavors threatened to undermine the validity of Franz's arrangements, while Brahms, who at the time was basking in the

success of the *German Requiem*, presented a threat to Franz's artistic mantle. Franz responded with a two-pronged attack in his open letter. He subtly attempted to highlight the shortcomings of his rivals by alternately calling into question Chrysander's creativity and Brahms's scholarly abilities. Conspicuously, all the excerpts he selected for censure on aesthetic issues are taken from the duets arranged by Chrysander;<sup>40</sup> the list of consecutive intervals, which Franz claimed to have drawn at random, is, with only one exception, compiled from the numbers arranged by Brahms.<sup>41</sup>

Initially, much to Franz's delight, the open letter failed to elicit a response from those in the firing line. He wrote to Senfft von Pilsach: "Still no response is forthcoming from Chrysander—my opinion that the content of my little document can hardly be challenged seems to be confirmed."<sup>42</sup> Brahms, however, despite his silence, was furious.<sup>43</sup> As late as 1881, Schaeffer wrote to Franz describing a recent discussion with Brahms "from which it emerged only too evidently how much your letter to Hanslick . . . rankled him."<sup>44</sup> That Brahms was still aggrieved about the letter some ten years later is understandable. Apart from the obvious issues relating to the early-music

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., esp. pp. 20–25.

<sup>37</sup>"Hoffentlich wird ein Jeder mit mir darin übereinstimmen, dass Händel's Stil keine Schulfehler: Quinten, Octaven und wie dergleichen verpönte Dinge sonst noch heissen mögen, aufgedrängt werden dürfen" (*Offener Brief*, p. 16). The list of consecutive intervals can be found on pp. 17–19.

<sup>38</sup>*Robert Franz: Gespräche aus zehn Jahren*, pp. 80–81. Franz published his own arrangement of the piece with Breitkopf and Härtel in 1883.

<sup>39</sup>"Es ist schwer zu begreifen, wie ein Mann von Geschmack solches Zeug unter seinem Namen herausgeben kann" (letter of 15 Dec., 1870, in *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach*, p. 87).

<sup>40</sup>Franz selected excerpts from duets nos. 2 and 5 for particular criticism and commented on how "the notes stand so wearily and apathetically side by side." See *Offener Brief*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup>In the commentary, he noted: "Dieses Contingent schwerer Verstösse gegen den reinen Satz habe ich flüchtig herausgegriffen" (*Offener Brief*, p. 19). Franz's first example is from the second duet, which was arranged by Chrysander. In addition to the list of consecutive intervals, attention is also drawn to an instance in Brahms's accompaniment for duet no. 11, "Langue, geme," where the middle voice in the realization drops below the bass line (*Offener Brief*, p. 21).

<sup>42</sup>"Von Chrysander ist noch keine Entgegnung erfolgt—meine Ansicht, daß der Inhalt des Schriftchens kaum anzufechten ist, scheint sich bestätigen zu wollen" (letter of 6 Sept. 1871, in *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach*, p. 104).

<sup>43</sup>Brahms's own copy of the letter is held in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna under the catalogue number 10419/132. The volume is not signed and contains only two annotations, both referring to Franz's musical examples.

<sup>44</sup>"Nun entspann sich eine Discussion, aus der nur zu evident hervorging, wie sehr ihn Ihr Brief an Hanslick . . . gewurmt haben" (letter of 2 Jan. 1881, in *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach*, p. 309).



revival, Franz undoubtedly touched a nerve with his list of consecutive intervals. Brahms himself was fond of collecting examples of such intervals in compositions by other composers and can hardly have been pleased to find his own work held up for inspection.<sup>45</sup>

Brahms was initially disillusioned by the whole affair. In 1876 Chrysander tried to coax him into realizing accompaniments for a collection of songs by Handel.<sup>46</sup> But Brahms refused, responding: "So much nonsense is spoken about the matter nowadays—in particular the long-practiced and customary courteousness towards Robert Franz has made everything so unclear—I want nothing to do with it."<sup>47</sup> His attitude changed, however, when Chrysander unearthed nine additional duets by Handel in London and decided to incorporate them in an enlarged and revised edition of volume 32. He engaged Brahms to arrange six of the new duets and also offered him the opportunity to revise his original arrangements. Brahms responded this time with enthusiasm: "I await the duets with pleasure, but certainly now I have bragged that I could make them marvelously better through another examination. I want to be somewhat cautious, also now to have fun and look at Schaeffer's review."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup>See Paul Mast, "Brahms's Study 'Octaven u. Quinten u. A.,' with Schenker's Commentary Translated," *Music Forum* 5 (1980), 1–196.

<sup>46</sup>Chrysander was also much aggrieved by Franz's public attack, which he perceived as a direct personal assault. See his letter to Johann Baptist Wolf of 27 February 1872. Götz Traxdorf, Jens Wehmann, and Konstanze Musketa, *Katalog zu den Sammlungen des Händel-Hauses in Halle*, 9. Teil: Nachlässe und Teilnachlässe; vol. 2: *Briefe aus dem Teilnachlass Friedrich Chrysander* (Halle: Händel-Haus, 2001), p. 282.

<sup>47</sup>"Heute aber wird so viel über die Sache gekohlt—namentlich die langgeübte und gewohnte Höflichkeit gegen Robert Franz hat alles so unklar gemacht—ich möchte nicht mitmachen" (letter of 15 May 1877, in Gustav Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," *Beiträge zur hamburgischen Musikgeschichte*, Schriftenreihe des Musikwissenschaftlichen Instituts der Universität Hamburg, vol. 1, ed. H. Husmann (Hamburg: Musikwissenschaftliches Institut der Universität Hamburg, 1956), pp. 46–69, at p. 64. Regarding the proposed Handel edition, see Imogen Fellinger, "Das Händel-Bild von Brahms," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 3 (1989), 235–57, at 246–49.

<sup>48</sup>"Die Duette erwarte ich gern, aber nun habe ich renommirt, als könnte ich sie durch weiteres Anschauen wunders besser machen! Etwas vorsichtig will ich sein, auch jetzt mir den Spaß machen und Schäffers Kritik ansehen" (Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," p. 65).

Subsequently, when the revised edition appeared in 1880, the duets arranged by Chrysander and Joachim were reprinted with only a few, very minor alterations. Brahms, however, seized upon the opportunity to reconsider his arrangements. Although many pages appear unchanged or with only one or two measures altered, in some instances Brahms made very significant modifications. Most often, as Howard Serwer notes, he removed "instance[s] of accompaniment doubling the voice, and he increased the density of the musical texture."<sup>49</sup> Significantly, he also rewrote all but one of the passages with consecutive intervals highlighted by Franz in his open letter.<sup>50</sup> In several cases, Brahms retained the offending intervals, but lessened their effect, as evidenced in Franz's seventh example, taken from duet no. 10, "Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi." Franz highlighted the consecutive octaves between bass and soprano in the second measure of the fourth system on p. 68 of the 1870 edition (ex. 1). In his 1880 edition, Brahms clarified the voice leading and stressed, through the introduction of a suspension, that the c<sup>2</sup># proceeds from the alto b<sup>1</sup> rather than the soprano f<sup>2</sup>#, which transfers to an f<sup>1</sup># in a lower voice (ex. 2). In other cases, Brahms eradicated the consecutive intervals altogether. Franz's second example, for instance, taken from duet no. 7, "Quando in calma ride il mare," draws attention to consecutive octaves between the bass and soprano, which Brahms eliminated in the 1880 edition (see exs. 3 and 4).<sup>51</sup>

At this point, Brahms, fired with enthusiasm, suggested to Chrysander that they offer the six newly arranged duets to Peters for commercial publication. He explained his motives in a letter dated 14 August 1880: "Our great edition is just a notorious secret for many, and

<sup>49</sup>Serwer, "Brahms and the Three Editions of Handel's Chamber Duets and Trios," p. 150.

<sup>50</sup>Brahms let stand the passage containing consecutive fifths in Franz's eighth example, taken from duet no. 10, "Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi" (p. 69, system 4, mm. 2–3 of the 1870 edition). See *Offener Brief*, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup>The removal of the erroneous intervals was a cause for much celebration for Franz. He wrote at length on the matter to Senfft von Pilsach, heralding the revisions as a testimony to the effectiveness of his open letter. He also proposed writing another letter in response to the 1880 edition, a plan that fell by the wayside. See *Robert Franz und Arnold Freiherr Senfft von Pilsach*, pp. 308–09.

19

ser - dis - giun - ta, quest' av -  
dis - giun - ta,

Example 1: Handel, "Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi,"  
*G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (1870), Andante, m. 19.

19

ser - dis - giun - ta, quest' av -  
dis - giun - ta,

Example 2: Handel, "Tanti strali al sen mi scocchi,"  
*G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (1880), Andante, m. 19.

this second one (from which the duets can also be published individually) will keep other arrangers away for the time being."<sup>52</sup> He expanded on the purpose of the proposed Peters edition in a letter to Simrock, elaborating on exactly which "other arrangers" he wanted to keep away:

I would rather write today than to have you hear it accidentally first that I'm dealing a little with Peters! Chrysander has found the greatest and most

<sup>52</sup>"Daß unsere große Ausgabe doch für gar Viele bloß ein großes berühmtes Geheimnis ist und diese zweite (die auch vielleicht die Duette einzeln bringt) zunächst andere Bearbeiter abhält" (Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," p. 66).

beautiful duets by Handel, which I have arranged. Now for different reasons it is good, practical, and necessary that these are also published by Peters in addition to the large edition. In particular, so that Franz and others don't have a free hand and so that I can give my work in a somewhat freer form.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup>"Daß Sie es nicht einmal zufällig hören, schreibe ich lieber schon heute: ich handel ein wenig mit Peters an! Chrysander hat nämlich größte und schönste Duette von Händel gefunden, die ich bearbeitet habe. Nun ist es aus verschiedenen Gründen gut, praktisch und nötig, daß diese außer in der großen Ausgabe auch bei Peters erscheinen. Namentlich, daß nicht Franz u. a. ganz freie Hand haben, daß ich meinen Arbeit in etwas freiere Form geben kann usw" (*Johannes Brahms, Briefwechsel* [hereafter *Briefwechsel*], 16 vols. [Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1908–22; rpt. Tutzing: Schneider, 1974], X, 163).

44

te, le tem-pes

- vi - ci - ne, le - tem - pes te, le tem -

This musical score shows the vocal parts and continuo accompaniment for Handel's "Quando in calma ride il mare." The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two staves are the continuo accompaniment. The lyrics are: "te, le tem-pes - vi - ci - ne, le - tem - pes te, le tem -".

Example 3: Handel, "Quando in calma ride il mare,"  
*G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (1870), mm. 44–45.

44

te, le tem-pes

- vi - ci - ne, le - tem - pes te, le tem -

This musical score shows the vocal parts and continuo accompaniment for Handel's "Quando in calma ride il mare." The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two staves are the continuo accompaniment. The lyrics are: "te, le tem-pes - vi - ci - ne, le - tem - pes te, le tem -".

Example 4: Handel, "Quando in calma ride il mare,"  
*G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (1880), mm. 44–45.

Brahms's eagerness to offer the public an alternative to Franz's arrangements of Handel gives an indication of the extreme disparity between their respective styles of continuo realization. Three of the duets contained in Chrysander's edition, "Va, speme infida," "Tacete, ohimè, tacete," and "Langue, geme," were also included by Franz in his 1882 publication, *Zwölf Duette aus verschiedenen Opern und den Kammer-Duetten mit Begleitung des Pianoforte bearbeitet von Robert Franz*. Of these, "Langue geme," which Brahms arranged initially for the 1870 installment of the Italian Duets and Trios and reworked for the 1880 edition, illustrates vividly the opposing aesthetics of the two men. The difference between Brahms's 1870 and 1880 realizations is slight; the second realization is essentially a refined version of the first, with

the intrinsic character of the earlier realization unchanged. As is evident from the two versions of mm. 1–11 of the duet, presented side by side in ex. 5, both realizations provide an unobtrusive, predominantly chordal support for Handel's voice parts. The continuo parts remain subordinate to the vocal lines throughout, and counterpoint is kept to a minimum.

Certain differences do exist between the two realizations. The texture is noticeably richer in the later realization, with four-part harmony more common than in the 1870 accompaniment, where Brahms restricts himself predominantly to three parts. In the 1880 version, there is also less doubling of the vocal line. For example, the notes of the alto part in mm. 10–11 are doubled by the piano in the 1870 version, but are complemented by an independent pi-

S  
A  
1870  
1880

Lan - gue, ge - me, sos - pi - ra e si -

7  
A  
1870  
1880

la - gna co - lom - ba, che chia - ma l'er - ran - te - com - pa - gna,

Example 5: Handel, "Langue, geme," *G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32 (1870, 1880), mm. 1–11.

ano part in the later version. Coupled with the increased independence of the later realization is the presence of slightly more contrapuntal writing in the piano part. Significantly, however, Brahms never allows the counterpoint to compete with the vocal lines. Instead he employs it subtly to fill out the texture when the vocal lines are resting, as in m. 9 of the 1880 version.<sup>54</sup>

Contrasting strongly with Brahms's understated realizations is the sumptuous accompaniment provided by Franz for the same passage (ex. 6). Franz favors a rich texture, with four- and occasionally five-part writing present throughout. Moreover, instead of adhering to

idiomatic continuo style in which the bass line alone is taken by the left hand and all other parts are consigned to the right hand, he divides the material equally between the hands. Indeed, Franz's accompaniment more closely resembles a newly composed piano arrangement than a continuo realization. Handel's bass line is transposed down an octave in the first seven measures, and Franz asserts his own identity from the outset, introducing an unrelated dotted motive under the vocal line in m. 1 that dominates the accompaniment throughout.

Franz's treatment of mm. 58–63 (ex. 7) shows how far removed his accompaniment is from a Baroque continuo realization. Here he doubles the notes of the alto part while shadowing the decorative sixteenth notes of the soprano, and later the alto, with a two-part texture constructed from the dotted motive introduced in m. 1. Because of the distance between the two

<sup>54</sup>For further comparisons between the 1870 and 1880 realizations of the duet, see Serwer, "Brahms and the Three Editions of Handel's Chamber Duets and Trios," pp. 149–50.

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes a Soprano (S) part with a whole rest, an Alto (A) part with the lyrics 'Langue, geme, sos-pi-ra e si-', and a piano accompaniment starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *cresc.* marking. The second system includes an Alto (A) part with the lyrics 'la-gna co-lom-ba, che chia-ma l'er-ran-te-com-pa-gna, etc.' and a piano accompaniment ending with an *etc.* marking.

Example 6: Handel, "Langue, geme," *Zwölf Duette aus verschiedenen Opern und den Kammer-Duetten mit Begleitung des Pianoforte bearbeitet von Robert Franz* (Leipzig: Fr. Kistner, 1882), mm. 1–11.

lowest lines, the left hand is occasionally arpeggiated, creating a texture that owes little to Baroque continuo practices. Brahms, in contrast, at this point in the duet provides an uncomplicated accompaniment devoid of elaborate figuration (ex. 8). He restricts himself to a three-part texture of steady quarter-note movement, introducing a fourth part only to emphasize the end of the phrase.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Brahms's 1870 and 1880 realizations of this passage are identical. For further comparisons of Brahms and Franz's styles of realization, see Hinrichsen, "Die Bach-Gesamtausgabe und die Kontroversen um die Aufführungspraxis der Vokalwerke," pp. 249–50, in which the two composers' realizations for Bach's *O Ewiges Feuer*, BWV 34, are contrasted. A shorter comparison of the two composers' arrangements for Handel's "Langue geme" can also be found in Fellinger, "Das Händel-Bild von Brahms," pp. 245–46.

#### BRAHMS'S CONTINUO REALIZATIONS IN HIS OWN PERFORMANCES

At the heart of Brahms's opposition to Franz's realizations lay the fact that his detailed arrangements removed all opportunities for extemporization. Brahms's concept of the purpose of a continuo realization differed considerably from Franz's; unlike the latter, he had no desire to present the world with a finished product. He observed to Chrysander: "I simply do not want to imply with a printed arrangement that *I* accompany like that; I only want to supply the unpracticed (and also the out-of-practice player) with a stopgap."<sup>56</sup> The impro-

<sup>56</sup>"Nun will ich aber doch mit einer gedruckten Begleitung nicht sagen, daß *ich* eben so begleite, ich will nur dem Ungeübten (auch dem ungeübten Spieler) einen Notbehelf liefern" (Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," p. 64).

Example 7: Handel, "L'engue, geme," *Zwölf Duette aus verschiedenen Opern und den Kammerduetten mit Begleitung des Pianoforte* bearbeitet von Robert Franz, mm. 58–63.

visatory nature of Baroque continuo realizations presented those nineteenth-century early-music revivalists searching for an authentic interpretation with a major dilemma. Thus, in the preface to his second edition of Handel's Italian duets and trios, Chrysander noted: "One who is really experienced in the art of accompaniment ought always to be able to invent new modifications to suit the varying requirements of different singers, instruments etc. For the art of through-bass has its proper life in extemporaneous playing."<sup>57</sup> However, if Baroque music was to be made accessible to the widest possible audience, it was frequently necessary to sacrifice the improvisatory aspect of

the continuo. The ability to extemporize with skill from a figured bass was no longer widespread among keyboard players, and providing a continuo realization was a practical necessity. Mendelssohn alluded to the problem in 1839 in a letter to William Sterndale Bennett regarding his proposed edition of a number of Handel's oratorios. "You will recollect that I had in mind to publish some of Handel's scores viz.: in the original shape, and only with a written organ part of mine for those who do not know how to accompany that sort of music on the Organ—of whom we have plenty in this country."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup>G. F. Händels Werke, vol. 32 (2nd edn., 1880), p. ii.

<sup>58</sup>Letter of 3 April 1839, cited in R. Sterndale Bennett, "Mendelssohn as Editor of Handel," *Monthly Musical Record* 86 (1956), 83–94, at 85.

58

S  
l'er - ran

A  
co - lom - ba che chia - ma l'er - ran - te com

Pf.

61

S  
te,

A  
pa gna,

Pf.

Example 8: Handel, "Lange, geme," *G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 32, mm. 58–63.

Of course, while the ability to improvise a continuo part may not have been a skill possessed by many musicians, it would be wrong to assume that the tradition of figured bass had died out completely. It was still used to some extent in church music<sup>59</sup> and retained a role in music pedagogy, as is evidenced by the large number of treatises published on the subject during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> Figured-bass instruction made appearances in numerous nineteenth-century conservatory syllabi, a typical case being that of the Conservatory of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna. Here, figured bass was taught from shortly after the opening of the establishment in 1817 until 1839, when it appears to have been dropped from the syllabus. Instruction re-

sumed in 1863,<sup>61</sup> possibly reflecting the influence of the topical debate surrounding continuo realization.

Brahms himself was adept at continuo improvisation and apparently improvised in concert on occasion. In a letter to Brahms regarding the realizations for the Italian duets and trios, Chrysander included a pertinent remark: "I have also made the particular observation that your free accompaniments in concert using an unrealized continuo part differ from the written ones here only in the filling (which is understandable) but not in the structure."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Richard von Perger and Robert Hirschfeld, *Geschichte der K. K. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien* (Vienna: n.p., 1912), pp. 324–25.

<sup>60</sup>"Ich habe auch noch die besondere Wahrnehmung gemacht, daß Ihre freie Begleitung im Konzert auf Grund einen bloßen Continuo von dem hier Geschriebenen sich nur in der Füllung (die selbstverständlich ist), nicht aber in der Faktur unterscheidet" (letter of 24 Jan. 1870, in Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," p. 63). When and for what Brahms realized continuo parts are not specified. Certainly he may well have improvised accompani-

<sup>59</sup>Peter Williams and David Ledbetter, "Continuo," *New Grove*, 2nd edn., vol. 6, p. 351.

<sup>60</sup>See, for instance, Robert W. Wason, *Viennese Harmonic Theory from Albrechtsberger to Schenker and Schoenberg* (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1995).

When realizing the continuo parts for Handel's Italian duets and trios, Brahms repeatedly expressed his concerns to Chrysander about this nineteenth-century practice. He resented the constraints such realizations imposed on the performer and, in particular, was uneasy about the way in which written arrangements removed spontaneity from a performance. As he remarked to Chrysander, "I accompany from the score or bass line completely differently from how I would write it out, in particular—I have the freedom to accompany differently every day."<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, he was adamant that his published realizations should consist of no more than a skeletal accompaniment. Regarding the continuo part for his edition of the two C. P. E. Bach Violin Sonatas, Brahms remarked to his publisher, Rieter-Biedermann: "The figured bass is realized in the easiest possible manner, just for the most ordinary player. The others will do it differently and therefore I think that the figures must, in addition, be left in."<sup>64</sup>

Despite his apparent desire to maintain the improvisatory traditions associated with continuo playing, in his own performances of Baroque choral works Brahms followed nineteenth-century conventions and provided realizations for his keyboard players. In a discussion of his performance of Bach's *Christ lag ins Todesbanden* in Detmold, for instance, he wrote to Carl Grädener: "I had written out a part for the pianist, mainly (for instance) for the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse (duet for soprano and alto)."<sup>65</sup> During his

Detmold tenure, practicalities most likely demanded this course of action; in a letter to Joachim, Brahms described his pianist at the court as being "of little use."<sup>66</sup> The scenario was entirely different, however, in Vienna. Rudolf Bibl, who served as Brahms's organist with both the Singakademie and Musikverein, was a very capable musician,<sup>67</sup> and as resident organist at St. Peters and later the Stefansdom he likely would have numbered continuo extemporization among his skills.

Clearly Brahms wanted to appropriate full interpretive control over his early-music performances; by providing a full continuo realization, regardless of the abilities of his keyboard players, he could ensure that the figured-bass part was realized in the way that he felt best reflected Baroque performing practices. This attitude was typical among nineteenth-century early-music revivalists. Mendelssohn, for instance, when discussing preparations for his performance of *Solomon* at the Kölner Musikfest of 1835, remarked: "I have to write the whole organ part in the way that I think it should be played, and the cathedral organist there (Franz) Weber will play it. He is supposed to be a solid musician and a capable player—so it is all going really well and I have just to undertake the large task of writing it, since I would like the thing to be as good as possible."<sup>68</sup>

A number of the organ realizations that Brahms made for Viennese performances are still held in the archives of the Gesellschaft der

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ments for his performances of C. P. E. Bach's Violin Sonatas. In a letter to Clara Schumann dated 5 February 1856, for instance, he described his intentions to perform one of the sonatas with the violinist Böie. See Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann—Johannes Brahms: Briefe aus den Jahren 1853–1896*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1927), I, 171. It is also possible that he may have improvised continuo parts for performances he gave of Handel's vocal music with Julius Stockhausen.

<sup>63</sup>"Ich begleite aus der Partitur oder der Baßstimme ganz anders, als ich es aufschreiben würde, namentlich aber—habe ich die Freiheit, jeden Tag anders zu begleiten" (letter of 15 May 1877, in Fock, "Brahms und die Musikforschung," p. 64).

<sup>64</sup>Letter of 19 January 1864, *Briefwechsel*, XIV, 83ff.

<sup>65</sup>Letter of ca. 20 November 1859, in Styra Avins and Josef Eisinger, "Six Unpublished Letters from Johannes Brahms," *For the Love of Music: Festschrift in Honor of Theodore Front on His 90th Birthday*, ed. Darwin F. Scott (Lucca: Lim antiqua, 2002), p. 125. The realization is no longer

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extant. Avins notes that "in another unpublished letter to Grädener surely dating from the same time, Brahms writes: 'My piano part for the Bach is no longer available'" (Ibid., p. 125, n. 46).

<sup>66</sup>Letter of 26 November 1858, in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Styra Avins, trans. Avins and Josef Eisinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 180.

<sup>67</sup>Otto Biba, "Brahms, Bruckner und die Orgel," *Bruckner Symposium: Johannes Brahms und Anton Bruckner*, ed. Othmar Wessely (Linz: Anton Bruckner-Institut, 1988), pp. 191–96, at p. 195.

<sup>68</sup>"Ich werde daher die ganze Orgelstimme in der Art, wie ich sie mir gespielt denke, schreiben müssen, und der dortige Domorganist (Franz) Weber wird sie spielen; er soll ein fester Musikus und tüchtiger Spieler sein,—also geht das recht gut und macht mir nur die grosse Arbeit des Schreibens, da ich die Sache so gut wie möglich zu haben wünschte" (Felix Mendelssohn-Barthóldy, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1833 bis 1847*, ed. Paul and Carl Mendelssohn [Leipzig: Hermann Mendelssohn, 1863], p. 92).



Musikfreunde.<sup>69</sup> These offer valuable insights into the extent to which Brahms controlled the continuo playing of his organist, Rudolf Bibl. Beyond eliminating the factor of extemporization from the continuo part, Brahms believed that each individual realization should be made with a view to a particular performance, taking into account specific forces, instruments, and location. Accordingly, when Hermann Levi asked him for the use of his continuo arrangement for Handel's *Saul*, he refused:

I will get back to you straight away and say in a hurry that I just cannot help you with *Saul*. With all such arrangements I have made absolutely sure with the withdrawal of trimmings and [with] all possible chicaneries that the parts suit only me. One does such work only for the concert in question, for the available resources etc.<sup>70</sup>

The organ realizations for the majority of the performances with the Musikverein are, as Otto Biba has noted, "meticulously worked through" and contain both dynamic and registration markings.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the realizations for *Saul*, per-

formed during Brahms's first season with the Musikverein, and *Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft*, performed early in the second season, leave little to chance. The manuscripts, copied in Rudolf Bibl's hand with corrections and performance marks added by Brahms, are fully realized and, crucially, lack figured-bass notation, indicating that there was no call for Bibl to improvise to any significant extent.

Only in the *St. Matthew Passion* did Brahms allow Bibl latitude with the organ realization. This, the final work that Brahms performed with the Musikverein, was by far his largest undertaking with the choir; consequently, although he spent some three months preparing for the concert, it is hardly surprising that his organ realization for the performance is a rushed and incomplete affair.<sup>72</sup> The score, it must be said, is somewhat misleading. Later conductors often appropriated Brahms's performing materials and added their own directions.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the *St. Matthew Passion* realization contains extensive insertions in a number of hands. Bibl himself, for instance, signed and dated the manuscript on two separate occasions, initially on 23 March 1875, when he performed with Brahms, and again on 1 April 1890, indicating that he also used the realization for a much later performance. As a result, it is difficult in places to discern the exact state of the realization that Bibl used for Brahms. Nevertheless, the score clearly reveals that Bibl had a good deal of autonomy in his final performance under the composer. While Bibl has neatly copied the bass line in full, the right-hand part is very sketchy, with numerous blanks and in many places only a penciled-in melody line. In contrast to Brahms's earlier realizations, the organ part includes Bach's figured-bass notation

<sup>69</sup>Organ parts exist for Bach's *Liebster Gott, wann werd ich sterben*, BWV 8, *O ewiges Feuer*, BWV 34, *Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft*, BWV 50, and the *St. Matthew Passion*, under the catalogue numbers III/25427, III/25463, III/25454, and III/1935 respectively. Of the Handel works conducted by Brahms, only the organ part for *Saul* (III/6957) has survived. See Hancock, *Brahms's Choral Compositions and His Library of Early Music*, p. 87; and Margit L. McCorkle, *Johannes Brahms: Thematisch-Bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Munich: Henle, 1984), pp. 648–49 and pp. 651–52. I am grateful to the staff at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde for allowing me access to these manuscripts.

<sup>70</sup>"Ich komme eben zurück und sage in Eile: daß ich Dir beim *Saul* wohl nicht helfen kann. Bei allen derartigen Bearbeitungen habe ich durch Zurücknahme der Beilagen und alle möglichen Schikanen ganz eigentlich dafür gesorgt, daß die Stimmen nur für mich taugen. Macht man doch solche Arbeit nur für das betreffende Konzert, für die grade vorhanden Mittel etc." (*Briefwechsel*, VII, 200). In this case Brahms's refusal to comply with Levi's request was probably motivated in part by their recent estrangement. He was, however, equally reluctant to allow Spitta to use his realization of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* for the Leipzig Bach-Verein's performance of the cantata. Brahms did eventually acquiesce to the request, but refused to comply with Spitta's subsequent suggestion that his realization be published by Rieter-Biedermann as part of the society's cantata series. See Siegmund Helms, "Johannes Brahms und Johann Sebastian Bach," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 57 (1971), 13–81 at 24–26; and *Briefwechsel*, I, 1; XIV, 246–47, and 250–52; XV, 329; XVI, 63–69.

<sup>71</sup>Biba, "Brahms, Bruckner und die Orgel," p. 195.

<sup>72</sup>Ironically, the realization is mistakenly listed on the catalogue card as "Copie nach Robert Franz," a misattribution that can be explained by the caption "Orgel v. Robert Franz," which was inserted over the first number in a hand other than Brahms's. Brahms himself provided little if any realization for this number; the right-hand part alternates fragments of melodic outline with extensive blank passages.

<sup>73</sup>For more on this issue, see Hancock, *Brahms's Choral Compositions and His Library of Early Music*, p. 87.

throughout. At this point Brahms clearly trusted Bibl to elaborate in performance.<sup>74</sup>

WIND QUARTET VERSUS ORGAN  
VERSUS OTHER KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS:  
INSTRUMENTATION AND THE CONTINUO PART

Brahms's extensive use of the organ is in itself significant. The practice of employing the organ as the mainstay of the continuo group was by no means commonplace in nineteenth-century Germany. On the contrary, the instrument was frequently omitted or used only sparingly, and the question of what role, if any, keyboard instruments should play in the continuo group was by far the most controversial dispute to afflict the early-music revival.

Performances without organ were motivated in the first instance by practical concerns. One of the major problems associated with the transfer of Baroque sacred music from church to concert hall was the shortage of organs in the latter. Mendelssohn, for instance, had no organ at his disposal in the *Singsaal* of the Berlin Singakademie in 1829 and orchestrated the continuo part for the *St. Matthew Passion*, simply for cellos, basses, and the piano from which he conducted.<sup>75</sup> Given the ever-expanding forces in nineteenth-century performances of Baroque music, however, the piano had limited appeal as a substitute for the organ. Far more popular was the practice of replacing the organ with a wind quartet, forged by Mozart in his arrangements of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, *Messiah*, the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, and *Alexander's Feast*.<sup>76</sup> As the century progressed and organs became more common in concert halls, the practical constraints dictating continuo forces

diminished.<sup>77</sup> Mendelssohn reintroduced the organ in his performances of choral works by Handel and Bach in the 1830s and 40s,<sup>78</sup> and in the second half of the century, a growing interest in historically informed performances led musicologists to call for reinstating keyboard instruments as the backbone of the continuo group. But the matter of restoring Baroque practices was far from straightforward. Franz and his cohorts had no desire to relinquish the performing tradition established by Mozart, and there was little consensus among the musicologists about the correct performing practices. To compound matters, hidden personal agendas and ulterior motives riddled the arguments put forward by all sides.<sup>79</sup>

The modernists repeatedly stressed the practical advantages of the wind-based continuo group; Franz, for instance, in his open letter, emphasized that organs were not widely available in concert halls.<sup>80</sup> The primary appeal of the wind quartet, however, lay in the fact that it allowed them to recast Baroque music in a nineteenth-century mold. According to Bagge, the organ as an accompanying instrument was not suited to the finely tuned ears of nineteenth-century audiences:

The use of the organ for us nowadays is subject to manifold reservations that would not have been felt so severely in the previous century when the hearing of people in general was not likely to have been as meticulous and fastidious. We have become too accustomed as a result of the artistic sophistication of our orchestra to much greater purity of intonation, much greater care with regard to beauty of tone and nuance of performance, not to note painfully the difference between free and tempered tuning arising from the combination of choir, orchestra and organ, not to be sensitive to the inconsistency arising from

<sup>74</sup>Virginia Hancock observes that Brahms's own Bach-Gesellschaft copy of the *St. Matthew Passion* served as an additional guide for the organist and contains both Brahms's "sketchy instructions and the organist's additions." Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Martin Geck, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Matthäuspasion im 19. Jahrhundert: Die zeitgenössischen Dokumente und ihre ideengeschichtliche Deutung* (Regensburg: Bosse, 1967), p. 40.

<sup>76</sup>The arrangements were made for Baron Gottfried van Swieten's Gesellschaft der Associierten concert series in 1788. The concerts were held in the palaces of the Viennese aristocracy, in which no organs were available. See Andreas Holschneider, *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1973), Serie x, Supplement 28/1/1, ix.

<sup>77</sup>An organ was installed in the concert hall of the Musikverein, for example, at the beginning of the 1870s; its inaugural concert took place on 15 November 1872, during Brahms's directorship. See Hirschfeld and von Perger, *Geschichte der K. K. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*, p. 148.

<sup>78</sup>Hinrichsen, "Die Bach Gesamtausgabe und die Kontroversen um die Aufführungspraxis der Vokalwerke," p. 231.

<sup>79</sup>An overview of the different arguments presented is provided in Laurence Dreyfus, *Bach's Continuo Group: Players and Practices in His Vocal Works* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

<sup>80</sup>*Offener Brief*, p. 7.

the conflict between the organ's fixed temperament and the flexibility of the voices and solo instruments.<sup>81</sup>

Franz, who implemented a very liberal interpretation of Mozart's wind group in his continuo arrangements, likewise described the necessity of temperament as giving the organ "a rigid, unyielding character."<sup>82</sup> He was not, however, averse to employing it as an ancillary instrument in his continuo group for volume and coloristic effect. Essentially, the continuo part presented him with an opportunity to provide his publications of Baroque music with lush, idiosyncratic accompaniments. Thus, in his arrangement of the tenor aria "Geduld" from the *St. Matthew Passion*, he overrode Bach's accompaniment of viola da gamba and organ continuo, orchestrating the aria instead for strings, two flutes, two clarinets in C, two bassoons, and double basses playing the main cello notes pizzicato.<sup>83</sup>

Musicologists were unanimous in their opposition to Franz's continuo instrumentation. They had, however, differing views on the respective roles played by the harpsichord and organ in the Baroque continuo group and, consequently, failed to offer an unequivocal alternative to sympathetic conductors such as Brahms. The arguments presented by the main protagonists, Bellermann, Chrysander, and Spitta, were far from systematic, frequently revealing more about individual concerns and politics than they did about Baroque performing practices. Bellermann's stance, for instance,

<sup>81</sup>"Die Anwendung der Orgel unterliegt für uns Heutige vielfachen Bedenken, die man im vorigen Jahrhundert, wo die Ohren der Menschen im Allgemeinen nicht so difficil und verwöhnt gewesen sein dürften, kaum so stark empfunden haben mag. Wir sind durch unsere künstlerisch verfeinerten Orchester an viel grössere Reinheit der Intonation, an viel grössere Sorgfalt in Bezug auf Klangschönheit und Vortragsnünancen gewöhnt worden, als dass wir bei der Vereinigung von Chor, Orchester und Orgel nicht den Unterschied zwischen freier und temperirter Stimmung schmerzlich bemerken, nicht empfindlich sein sollten gegen den Widerspruch des starren Elements des Orgeltons im Gegensatz zu der Schmiegsamkeit der Singstimmen und Einzel-Instrumente" (Selmar Bagge, "Joh. Seb. Bach's Trauer-Ode bearbeitet von Robert Franz," p. 325).

<sup>82</sup>*Offener Brief*, p. 7.

<sup>83</sup>*Joh. Seb. Bach's Passionsmusik nach dem Evangelischen Matthäus mit ausgeführten Accompanement bearbeitet von Robert Franz* (Leipzig: n.p., 1867).

reflected his position as one of the leading figures of the nineteenth-century *a capella* movement. Like Franz, Bellermann was not an admirer of the organ. His opposition emanated, however, from his conviction that all instrumental music is fundamentally impure. Adherent that the primary concern of Baroque composers was to emphasize the voice, he refused to concede that the organ was ever employed in vocal music by Bach and his contemporaries for coloristic purposes. Instead, he maintained it was used simply as a crutch: "One hears so frequently dilettantes expressing the opinion that older composers used the organ [in the continuo group] for the purpose of giving their works a characteristic color. This is, however, completely incorrect. The organ was a means of strengthening the bass in particular and then, where it was necessary, the choir parts."<sup>84</sup>

Accordingly, he ascribed the prevalence of the organ in Bach's vocal music to the fact that Bach had seldom had the opportunity of working with choirs capable of overcoming the difficulties in his music. The driving force in the Baroque orchestra, as far as Bellermann was concerned, was the less obtrusive harpsichord, an instrument that was more suited to his aesthetics. For practical purposes, he recommended substituting the piano for the harpsichord, citing as a model the performances of the Berlin Singakademie under his mentor, Eduard Grell.<sup>85</sup> Grell resolutely resisted all attempts to install an organ in the Singsaal and continued in Mendelssohn's footsteps, realizing the continuo part primarily with piano.<sup>86</sup>

In his seminal Bach biography, Spitta was quick to address Bellermann's erroneous assumptions. Yet, despite Spitta's thorough knowledge of documents concerning Bach's per-

<sup>84</sup>"Man hört so häufig von Dilettanten die Meinung aussprechen, als haben die älteren Componisten die Orgel zu dem Zwecke angewandt, ihren Werken ein eigenthümliches Colorit zu geben. Dies ist aber ganz unrichtig. Die Orgel war Verstärkungsmittel, namentlich des Basses, und dann, wo es nöthig wurde, der Chorstimmen" ("Robert Franz's Bearbeitungen älterer Tonwerke," *AmZ* 7 [1872], 489-95, 505-10, 521-26, at 494).

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, esp. pp. 491 and 494.

<sup>86</sup>Werner Rackwitz, "Händeliana in Briefen Friedrich Chrysanders an Heinrich Bellermann," *Händel-Jahrbuch* 45 (1999), 220-52, at 234.

formances, his method of reinterpreting the facts to suit his arguments was not far removed from Bellermaun's. Strongly motivated by the patriotic and religious tendencies of the early-music revival in Germany, Spitta asserted that the organ was the only appropriate keyboard instrument with which to realize the continuo in Bach's sacred music. Regarding the role of the harpsichord in Bach's continuo group, Laurence Dreyfus observes: "Although he [Spitta] took the trouble to cite all the known sources that pointed to its use, he then proceeded to deny that they had any significance."<sup>87</sup>

Spitta regarded the harpsichord as an invasive Italianate import, a foreign influence that had acted to the detriment of Germany's musical tradition. In contrast, the organ, like Bach, evoked a rich German heritage. Indeed, he believed that Bach's style and the organ were inextricably linked, stating, "the style of Bach's church music, with all its individualities, resulted from organ music." Crucially, he felt that the organ embodied the Lutheran religious spirit, which had culminated during Bach's lifetime. "Still, this organ is not to be conceived of as a dead mechanical instrument, but as the conveyer and the symbol of the devotional sentiment of the church, which is what it had indeed become in the course of the seventeenth century, and by the aid of Bach himself."<sup>88</sup>

Chrysander focused his attention predominantly on Handel and asserted that the continuo group should include both the harpsichord and organ. In particular, he was highly critical of Mendelssohn's continuo realization for *Israel in Egypt*, in which the organ was the sole keyboard instrument. Basing his judgment on documentary evidence he had compiled, which indicated that Handel alternated the organ and harpsichord in *Saul*,<sup>89</sup> Chrysander denounced Mendelssohn's sole use of the organ as being "too ecclesiastical," and "not in keeping with

Handel's spirit."<sup>90</sup> Referring to the writings of the theorist Lodovico Grossi da Viadana, he claimed that the organ and harpsichord had complementary roles, and that the keyboard section of the continuo group had a dual purpose: "it should simultaneously support the sustaining sound of the harmony with the organ, and lead the singers and mark the rhythm with the harpsichord."<sup>91</sup> Chrysander's conception of Handel's continuo group was an evolving one. In the early 1860s, for instance, he was of the opinion that Handel performed his oratorios with one to two small organs and two harpsichords;<sup>92</sup> consequently, in his edition of *Solomon* he provided an accompaniment for two organs.<sup>93</sup> Later, however, he revised this viewpoint and decided that there was no evidence to indicate that Handel actually had used two organs.<sup>94</sup>

Chrysander made significant efforts to demystify Baroque realization practices, most notably publishing a series of articles on the topic in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1877.<sup>95</sup> But he offered little concrete practical advice on the functions of the keyboard instruments within the continuo group. In the preface to his edition of *Solomon*, for instance, he simply noted regarding the double organ part: "As two organs are never used now, this cannot be of any practical utility, and must be treated as only an attempt to imitate the setting of the score." Only on rare occasions, as in his edition of the *Dettingen Te Deum*, did he offer advice regarding modern performances. Here he noted: "Where the accompaniment of

<sup>87</sup>Dreyfus, *Bach's Continuo Group*, p. 14.

<sup>88</sup>Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach, His Work and Influence on the Music of Germany, 1685–1750*, trans. Bell and Fuller-Maitland, 3 vols. (New York: Dover, 1992), II, 109, 306.

<sup>89</sup>Chrysander, "Händels Orgelbegleitung zu Saul und die neuste englische Ausgabe dieses Oratoriums," *Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1863), 408–28.

<sup>90</sup>Chrysander, "Mendelssohn's Orgel Begleitung zu *Israel in Aegypten*," *Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1863), 249–67. English translation provided in Christian Hellmuth Wolff, trans. Ernest Saunders and Luise Eitel, "Mendelssohn and Handel," *Musical Quarterly* 45 (1959), 175–90, at 182.

<sup>91</sup>Chrysander, "Die harmonische Begleitung auf Grund des Basses in der Musik des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," *AmZ* 12 (1877), 81–84, at 83.

<sup>92</sup>He outlined his theory in a letter, dated 4 February 1862, to Bellermaun. See Rackwitz, "Händeliana," p. 235.

<sup>93</sup>*G. F. Händels Werke*, 26 (1867).

<sup>94</sup>Rackwitz, "Händeliana," p. 235.

<sup>95</sup>Chrysander, "Die harmonische Begleitung auf Grund des Basses in der Musik des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts," "Lodovico Viadanas Bericht von der Erfindung und Einrichtung seines Basso continuo," and "Joh. Stades Anleitung, den Basso continuo zu behandeln, vom Jahre 1626," *AmZ* 12 (1877), 85–88, 99–103, and 119–23.

a good piano is available, the organ had better be quite silent in passages of solo singing."<sup>96</sup>

Clearly, it was difficult for Brahms to obtain unambiguous, objective guidelines for the makeup of the continuo group. Although Brahms and Bellermand were not close,<sup>97</sup> both Chrysander and Spitta had Brahms's ear, and their influence can certainly be seen in his approach to the continuo group. Brahms, however, was not prone to accepting advice or opinions unquestioningly. He rightly disagreed with Spitta, for example, on one occasion over the authenticity of an anonymous setting of the *St. Luke Passion*, which the latter believed to be by Bach.<sup>98</sup> A similar scholarly inquisitiveness is apparent in his approach to the continuo group. In his early performances, Brahms relied considerably on the advice of friends, such as Joachim and Albert Dietrich.<sup>99</sup> As he grew in confidence as a conductor, he began to trust his own scholarly instincts, and a clear pattern of increasingly independent thought can be observed in his performances of the 1860s and 70s.

During his tenures at Detmold and the Singakademie, Brahms's performing forces were dictated by practical and financial constraints. The palace at Detmold had no organ. For his performances of *Christ lag in Todesbanden* and *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*, he had to make do for the continuo part with the support of a pianist and, at Joachim's recommendation, a wind group of double oboes, clarinets, and bassoons.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, at the Singakademie, Brahms had to manage with whatever forces he could

muster. For his first concert, which included a performance of *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*, he had no orchestra at his disposal, and the accompaniment was provided solely by the organist Bibl.<sup>101</sup> Later, for the performance of the Christmas Oratorio, in which the Singakademie joined forces with the Imperial and Royal Court-Opera Orchestra, Brahms was still constricted by financial constraints. He wrote no keyboard realization for the performance because, as he explained to Joachim, he simply could not afford an organist.<sup>102</sup>

Only in his final conducting post, with the Musikverein, did Brahms have a full orchestra together with the services of both an organist and pianist at his disposal. It is in these concerts that his stance on the keyboard debate is most apparent. From the extant performance material from the concerts, it is clear that the organ rather than the piano played the fundamental role in his continuo group: whereas Brahms wrote organ realizations for all of his Bach and Handel performances, no piano realizations exist. The programs for the concerts in question, however, indicate that Brahms did employ a pianist together with an organist on a number of occasions.<sup>103</sup>

For his performances of Handel's choral works, Brahms appears to have followed a diluted form of Chrysander's dual-keyboard directive, using predominantly the organ but employing the piano in place of the harpsichord for the secco recitatives.<sup>104</sup> Bibl is listed as the organist on the programs for each of the four Handel works, the *Dettingen Te Deum*, *Alexander's Feast*, *Solomon*, and *Saul*. The pianist Julius Epstein is included in the program for the *Dettingen Te Deum*,<sup>105</sup> and the programs

<sup>96</sup>Preface to *G. F. Händels Werke*, vol. 25 (1866).

<sup>97</sup>See in particular Rackwitz, "Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis Friedrich Chrysander zu Johannes Brahms und Joseph Joachim."

<sup>98</sup>See Helms, "Johannes Brahms and Johann Sebastian Bach," pp. 29–30.

<sup>99</sup>See, for instance, *Briefwechsel*, V, 208–14; and Helms, "Johannes Brahms and Johann Sebastian Bach," p. 37.

<sup>100</sup>For details of the instrumentation used, see *Briefwechsel*, V, 208–12, Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, I, 339, and in particular Brahms's letter to Grädener of ca. 20 November 1859, published in Avins and Eisinger, "Six Unpublished Letters from Johannes Brahms," pp. 125–26. Joachim advised Brahms that if he was planning to stay in Detmold for a number of years, it would be worth convincing the prince to acquire an organ for the palace (*Briefwechsel*, V, 210). Brahms in turn advised Grädener, who was planning his own performance of *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, that a piano would not work in a larger hall and suggested using a harmonium in the absence of an organ.

<sup>101</sup>Florence May, *The Life of Brahms*, 2 vols. (2nd rev. edn., London: William Reeves, 1948), II, 346.

<sup>102</sup>Letter of 20 August 1875, *Briefwechsel*, VI, 107.

<sup>103</sup>All of the programs for Brahms's Musikverein concerts are held in the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde.

<sup>104</sup>There is no evidence to suggest that Brahms ever used a harpsichord in his choral performances; on the majority of the programs for his Musikverein concerts, the instrument used by his pianist, a Bösendorfer, is specifically listed.

<sup>105</sup>The program also contains a work that specifically includes the piano, an unspecified "Aria for Soprano, with obligato accompaniment for pianoforte and orchestra" by Mozart. The program gives no indication of whether or not Epstein played in the *Dettingen Te Deum*. Given, however, the accompanimental role of the piano in the

for *Alexander's Feast* and *Solomon* feature the pianist Leopold Landskron among the performers. Only the program for *Saul* contains no mention of a pianist. There is evidence, however, that a pianist was used in the performance: Brahms wrote "Clavier" over the secco recitatives in his conducting score of the work.<sup>106</sup>

For his performances of Bach's cantatas *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, *Liebster Gott, wann werd' ich sterben*, *O Ewiges Feuer*, and *Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft*, Brahms, in concurrence with Spitta's prescription, appears to have used only an organ in his continuo group. Bibl is listed as the organist on all four programs, and there is no mention of a pianist. In contrast, for the *St. Matthew Passion*, Brahms seems to have employed the piano rather than the organ for the secco recitatives: both Bibl and Landskron, Brahms's resident pianist with the Musikverein, are listed on the concert program. Despite his ardent support for Spitta's scholarly endeavors,<sup>107</sup> Brahms did not share his religious zeal.<sup>108</sup> Whether or not he agreed with Spitta's belief that the organ was essential to Bach's sacred music, he appears not to have accepted the symbolism that Spitta projected onto the instrument. Tellingly, in his copy of volume 28 of the *Bach Gesamtausgabe*, Brahms marked the following passage:

His [Bach's] musical style was not shaped solely at the harpsichord; on the other hand, it follows that one gets no nearer to the truth by shifting Bach's musical development from the harpsichord to the organ as this Professor Ph. Spitta seeks to do. . . . There is no more inaccurate and also no more damaging comparison than to symbolize Bach's sacred vocal music with an idealized organ. There is hardly

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Mozart aria, it seems likely that Brahms employed Epstein for a similar purpose in the *Te Deum*.

<sup>106</sup>Hellmut Federhofer, "Georg Friedrich Händels Oratorium 'Saul' in der Bearbeitung von Johannes Brahms," *Bericht des Brahms-Kongresses Wien, 1983*, ed. Susanne Antonicek and Otto Biba (Tutzing: H. Schneider, 1988), pp. 125–38, at p. 132.

<sup>107</sup>See, for instance, the correspondence between Brahms and Spitta published in Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, pp. 460–64.

<sup>108</sup>Daniel Beller-McKenna aptly describes Brahms's faith as an "undogmatic religiosity" in *Brahms and the German Spirit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 37.

an instrument that, if elevated to such a vague and unclear iconic status, could not make such a claim, if such a claim could indeed be made at all.<sup>109</sup>

Consequently, when preparing his performance for the *St. Matthew Passion*, Brahms did not rely solely on Spitta's advice but, characteristically, also consulted other sources. He highlighted the following remarks in his copy of the *Bach Gesamtausgabe's* copy of the *St. Matthew Passion*:

In addition to the *Continuo pro Cembalo*, the organ part contains the figured-bass notation for these [secco] recitatives. It can, however, be claimed with certainty that, apart from the instrumental bass, only the harpsichord accompanied these recitatives. Holding the chords on the organ during the many, frequently very long recitatives would have the same tiring effect as playing them staccato on this instrument. Incidentally, it is known that Bach always had a harpsichord available in his performances. For this reason, the usual indication *Organo e Continuo* is not used for these recitatives in our edition.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>"Seine [Bach's] Kunst ist auch keine einseitig am Clavier gebildete, woraus wiederum folgt, dass der Wahrheit nicht um einen Schritt näher gerückt wird, wenn man Bach's Entwicklungsgang vom Claviere auf die Orgelbank verschiebt, wie dies Professor Ph. Spitta in seiner Bach-Biographie durchzuführen sucht. . . . Es kann deshalb keinen unzutreffenderen, aber auch keinen schädlicheren Vergleich geben, als Bach's Tonkörper, den er in seinen kirchlichen Vokalwerken combinirt, mit einer idealen Orgel zu versinnbildlichen. Es giebt wohl kaum ein Instrument, welches, in einen nebelhaften, begrifflosen Idealismus erhoben, nicht Anspruch auf einen solchen Vergleich machen dürfte, wenn er überhaupt zulässig wäre" (*J. S. Bach's Werke*, vol. 28, p. xv). See Helms, "Johannes Brahms und Johann Sebastian Bach," p. 66.

<sup>110</sup>"Die Orgelstimmen, ausserdem aber der *Continuo pro Cembalo* enthalten die Bezifferung zu diesen Recitativen. Es ist aber mit Sicherheit zu behaupten, dass sie ausser dem Instrumentalbass nur mit dem *Cembalo* begleitet wurden. Das Aushalten der Accorde auf der Orgel durch die vielen, häufig sehr langen Recitative hätte von ebenso ermüdender, als deren kurzes Anschlagen auf diesem Instrumente von keineswegs schöner Wirkung, sein müssen. Uebrigens ist es bekannt, dass Bach bei seinen Aufführungen immer ein *Cembalo* bei der Hand hatte. Aus dem Grunde ist die in unserer Ausgabe sonst angenommene Bezeichnung *Organo e Continuo* bei diesen Recitativen nicht angewendet" (*J. S. Bach's Werke*, vol. 4, p. xxiii). The archive contains two complete sets of *J. S. Bach's Werke*, one bound in brown, and one in green. The former was Brahms's copy, which he used for personal study. He conducted, however, from the *Gesellschaft's* green edition. See Hancock, *Brahms and His Library of Chorale Music*, pp. 84–87.

The inclusion of Bibl and Landskron in the concert program suggests that Brahms adopted this approach, an assumption that is confirmed by his organ part for the performance. Realizations, partial realizations, or at the very least a full bass line with an empty right-hand staff are provided for all of the arias and chorales. The secco recitatives, however, are omitted from the manuscript entirely, with only the melody line of the final measures of each number provided as a cue. Presumably, Landskron undertook the task of realizing these at the piano. The accompaniment of recitatives with piano (in place of a harpsichord) was a common practice in the nineteenth century, owing much to C. P. E. Bach, who directed in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen* that

the organ is indispensable in church music because of the fugues, large choruses, and generally because of its binding quality. It provides splendor and maintains order.

But as soon as recitatives and arias appear in church music, particularly those in which the inner voices—comprising a sparse accompaniment—grant the vocal part every opportunity for embellishment, then a harpsichord must be present. One hears unfortunately all too often how empty the performance sounds in such a case when harpsichord accompaniment is missing.<sup>111</sup>

Dreyfus points out that J. S. Bach is unlikely to have adopted the practice.<sup>112</sup> But for Brahms, it undoubtedly had scholarly resonance, C. P. E. Bach being, in his opinion, “the best teacher of his father’s work.”<sup>113</sup>

Brahms’s treatment of continuo realization sums up his approach to early-music performance in general. Occasionally, bound by practicalities and influenced by contemporary conventions, he rejected historical performance

practices. Thus, he was not averse to occasionally amplifying Bach’s original instrumentation.<sup>114</sup> Brahms was not, however, afraid to challenge his audiences. He placed little weight on Franz’s assumption that early music needed to be updated to attract nineteenth-century listeners. On the contrary, he was eager to recreate the music as he believed the composer had intended it to sound, using the most authentic editions and scouring Baroque treatises in search of information on performance practice. His success as a composer and his sensitivity to the future of his own output undoubtedly influenced his understanding of his role in the early-music revival. Both Franz and Brahms were united by the near-reverential esteem in which they held the achievements of composers such as Bach and Handel. In contrast to Franz, who felt that his creative input was crucial to the survival of the early-music repertoire, Brahms saw his role as purely that of an interpreter. The continuo for Brahms was not a forum for his compositional creativity, but a puzzle from the past that needed to be solved in as artistic and authentic a manner as possible.



<sup>114</sup>See in particular Carmen Debryn, “Kolorit und Struktur: Bach’s Concerto *O ewiges Feuer* (BWV 34) in Brahms Bearbeitung,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Konzerts: Festschrift Siegfried Kross zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinmar Emans and Matthias Wendt (Bonn: Schröder, 1990), pp. 249–71.

### **Abstract.**

The early-music revival provoked much heated debate in the second half of the nineteenth century. The leading scholars of the era, Philipp Spitta and Friedrich Chrysander were keen to encourage performances and editions of early music that presented it in the spirit in which it was conceived. This approach met with vociferous opposition from Robert Franz and his supporters, who embraced a Darwinian aesthetic. Although committed to reviving the past, Franz believed that the tastes of nineteenth-century listeners had become too sophisticated to enjoy early music in its original state and modernized it accordingly.

The source of the most heated debates was the issue of continuo realization, a topic in which Brahms, through his performing and arranging ac-

<sup>111</sup>C. P. E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 2 vols. (Berlin: n.p., 1753 and 1762), II, 1–2, trans. in Dreyfus, *Bach’s Continuo Group*, p. 58.

<sup>112</sup>Dreyfus, *Bach’s Continuo Group*, pp. 58–63.

<sup>113</sup>Letter to Clara Schumann of 25 November 1855, cited in Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, p. 116. Brahms placed particular faith in C. P. E. Bach’s instructions regarding the continuo part. See his letter to Grädener of July 1856, in which he refers the latter to a discussion of continuo accompaniment in *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, in Avins and Eisinger, “Six Unpublished Letters from Johannes Brahms,” pp. 122–23.

tivities, had a vested interest. Franz, who dismissed the musicologists as artistic philistines, found a difficult adversary in Brahms. Brahms's scholarly inclinations have been well documented, and predictably, his approach to reviving Baroque music reflected a high level of historical awareness. He was, however, first and foremost a creative musician, and as a consequence, aesthetic issues were paramount in his performances and publications. Considerable tensions arose between Franz, and Brahms, and

Chrysander, which are explored here in relation to the latter's editions of Handel's Italian duets and trios. The difficulties surrounding continuo practice were not confined to opposition from Franz; even among musicologists there was much disagreement about how the music should be performed. Brahms's approach to continuo realization is considered in this context.

Keywords: Brahms, Franz, Chrysander, continuo, Handel.